DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 182 FL 012 162

AUTHOR Frohlich, Maria
TITLE Case Studies of Second Language Learning.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 239p.: M.A. Thesis, University of Toronto.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults; *Case Studies; Individual Differences; Language Research; *Learning Processes; Models; *Second Language Learning

ABSTRACT

Ten case studies of adults learning a second language are reported and analyzed in an effort to identify a variety of learning strategies. The superordinate strategies that were discovered lent themselves to the development of a tentative language learning model, which is set forth as a chart. The model is consistently confirmed by the various strategies, although it is therefore necessarily incomplete, since it cannot take into account the great individual differences that do, in fact, exist. (JB)

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CASE STUDIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

by

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Department of Educational Theory

A Thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in the
University of Toronto

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. H.H. Stern and Dr. M. Swain for their valuable comments, criticisms, and suggestions throughout the preparation of this study.

In the hope that some of the interviewees will read this thesis I would like to address a sincere word of thanks to them for disclosing the 'secrets' of their language learning experiences and thus making this study possible.

Special thanks are also due to Ms. A. Todesco, who assisted in the interviewing and subsequent transcribing of tapes. I gratefully acknowledge her contributions in the initial discussions and formulations of the identified language learning strategies.

I would further like to offer my thanks to Dr. N. Naiman for his constructive criticism during the analysis of the data. I also thank Ms. C. Currie, who helped to transcribe a few tapes. Ms. K. Scott deserves special praise for her excellent typing.

A final thank-you is extended to my husband Doug for his moral support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Origin of the Present Study

The present study has a dual origin: one was the suggestion that "case histories of adults who have learned one or more foreign languages at various ages and under various conditions" (Carroll, 1967:104) be examined in order to learn directly from the learners' experiences and insights something about the conditions of second language acquisition; the second impetus came from the suggestion that language learning strategies and techniques, as developed and employed by outstandingly successful language learners, should be identified so that this knowledge could be applied to the unsuccessful language learner and help him learn "how to learn" (Rubin, 1975:50; see also Stern, 1975). As a starting-point for future research, both Rubin and Stern offered tentative inventories of language learning strategies, details of which will be presented in the following section.

The present study, therefore, undertook biographical case studies, as suggested by Carroll, and laid particular emphasis on the isolation of language learning strategies and techniques. Partly, this study served as a contribution to a major research project on "The Good Language Learner", which was funded by the Department of the Secretary of State and completed in December 1975.

Rubin's and Stern's Inventories of Second Language Learning Strategies

To date, there has been little systematic research carried out which is primarily concerned with the task of identifying second language learning strategies and techniques. Being aware of the need to improve success in classroom language teaching, Rubin attempted to start filling this obvious gap in research. On the basis of her own classroom observations of good language students, her teaching experience, informal interviews with several successful learners and observations made by other second language teachers, Rubin formulated seven language learning strategies which she proposes as examples of the kind of information that should be sought in future research.

According to Rubin, a "strategy" refers to "the techniques or devices which a learner may use to acquire knowledge" (Rubin, 1975: 43). Rubin's list of strategies (Rubin, 1975:45-48) will be presented in an abbreviated form.

1. The good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser. It seems that the good language learner is both comfortable with uncertainty... and willing to try out his guesses.

2. The good language learner has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from a communication. He is willing to do many things to get his message across.

3. The good language learner is often not inhibited... He is willing to appear foolish if reasonable communication results. He is willing to make mistakes in order to learn and to communicate.

4. In addition to focusing on communication, the good language learner is prepared to attend to form... He attends to form in a particular way, constantly analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing.

5. The good language learner practices (sic).

6. The good language learner monitors his own and the speech of others. That is, he is constantly attending to how well his speech is being received and whether his performance meets the standards he has learned.

7. The good language learner attends to meaning... He attends to the context of the speech act, he attends to the relationship of the participants,... to the rules of speaking,... to the mood of the speech act.

Although her strategies remain general, as Rubin herself admits, they provide a basis for discussion and may thus enhance future research. To concretize and extend her own list of strategies, Rubin is now undertaking a study of second language learners, in which the learners are asked to describe and comment on their language learning on a daily basis.

In contrast to Rubin, Stern makes a clear distinction between strategy and technique. According to the definitions given in a presentation at the 88th Annual Spring Conference of the Ontario Modern Language Teachers' Association, a <u>strategy</u> refers to the general,

"overall characteristics of the approach employed by the learner". A technique refers to a "particular form of observable language learning behaviour" (Stern, 1974:10).

The strategies suggested by Stern are based upon his interpretation of the concept of language competence and the ensuing problems involved in learning a second language. In his interpretation of 'competence' Stern focuses on four characteristics:

1. The intuitive mastery of the forms of a language.
2. The intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meanings expressed by the language forms.
3. The capacity to use the language with maximum attention to meaning and minimum attention to form.
4. The creativity of language use.

As Stern points out, the language learner initially has to face a massive learning problem. He can neither comprehend the new language nor can he produce it. He has to cope with "the utter frustration of non-communication" (Stern, 1975:307).

While advancing in the language learning process, the learner constructs his own language, which passes through different successive approximations to the target language. During this process he has to come to terms with the "discrepancy between the inevitable and deep-seated presence of the first language and other languages previously learned as reference systems and the inadequate...

development of the new language as a new reference system" (Stern, 1974:25).

The learner also faces a "code-communication dilemma". He has to find a way of dealing with both the linguistic forms and the message he would like to convey.

The language learner is further presented with "the choice between rational and intuitive learning" and has to find the most advantageous way of approaching the learning task.

The ideal end-point of the learning process is native-like competence. The following abbreviated list of strategies, employed by the learner to cope with the problems indicated, reflects Stern's interpretations of first language competence based on his own experience as a language teacher and learner, on his reading of the relevant literature, and his discussions with Rubin (see Stern, 1975:311-316 for more details).

1. A personal learning style or positive learning strategies.
2. An active approach to the learning task.
3. A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers.
4. Technical know-how about how to tackle a language.
5. Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system, and revising this system progressively.
6. Constantly searching for meaning.
7. Willingness to practise.
8. Willingness to use the language in real communication.

9. Self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use.

10. Developing the second language more and more as a separate reference system and learning to think in it.

Although Stern's inventory of strategies is based upon a theoretical psychological foundation of language learning and Rubin's list mainly evolved from observation, there are obvious similarities and correspondences between both inventories.

Related Studies

In order to concretize her list of strategies, Rubin is presently undertaking a study of second language learners, in which the learners are asked to describe their language learning experiences on a daily basis. The 'diaries' are then analyzed with respect to possible strategies displayed by the students. In addition to the daily self-reports, some of the language classes are video-taped in order to examine what kind of strategies and other learning behaviours, e.g., gestures, could be observed.

Another investigation of second language learners involved in language learning is that of Wesche (1975). Wesche undertook a study which explored second language learning behaviour of adults, identifying specific learning procedures and related personality characteristics of outstanding students. The subjects were English-speaking civil servants in an intensive, audio-visual French course for beginners in Ottawa. The study focused on 37 students in high ability classes. A comparison was made with 23 students who dropped

out of training. Among other research instruments, Wesche used questionnaires and the direct interview technique to investigate what kind of strategies and techniques were employed by the language students. Some of the strategies and techniques identified were: the good language students "consciously sought out practice opportunities" (p. 175); they were "conversing aloud or internally" with themselves (p. 175); they emphasized that "practice is essential" (p. 178); and they commented on the "loss of inhibition towards using a foreign language" (p. 178) as a result of their success in language learning.

In a very recent article by Hosenfeld (1976), a different approach to the identification of language learning strategies is described. In view of the fact that teachers and researchers frequently focus on what students "should be doing" instead of asking what they "are doing", Hosenfeld proposes a self-observation and self-report procedure that will assist teachers in discovering their students' learning strategies (see also Hosenfeld, 1975). The author of this article asked students "to think aloud" (p. 120) while completing grammar exercises, which were found in the specific textbook the students were using. These interviews revealed many individual differences in the students' approaches to the tasks at hand. They also raised considerable doubt about the effectiveness of many exercises, since it became apparent that the students frequently did not deal with these exercises in the way the teacher assumed they would.

As for the usefulness of the research instrument itself, it became evident that students who are of junior-high-school age "are able to talk about their strategies and operations" (p. 128) as they perform specific tasks. Hosenfeld assumes that student self-reports might help to "distinguish between general laws of learning and idiosyncratic ways of operating" (p. 128).

Purposes of the Present Study

In view of the two inventories of second language learning strategies, presented above, the idea was conceived to test these strategies against the actual language learning experiences as reported by language learners who have successfully acquired one or more foreign languages. Although it would have been useful to interview poor language learners as well in order to establish clear differences between the characteristics of good and poor language learning, it was decided to concentrate mainly on the successful language learner first.

Despite the initial focus on the verification of the above-mentioned strategies, the present research study had a broader purpose; it was conceived as fulfilling four major functions:

1. Since detailed interviews with learners had not yet been used systematically in investigations on second language learning, the first purpose was to test the usefulness and effectiveness of interviews as a research instrument.

2. The second purpose of the study comprised two aspects: (a) to examine the validity of Rubin's and Stern's inventories and to develop a new or modified list which was to be based upon the self-reported experiences and insights of successful language learners; and (b) to discuss the usefulness of the concept of strategy.
3. In addition to a list of strategies, an inventory of language learning techniques, developed and employed by the interviewees, was to be compiled.
4. The interviews were to cover other factors of relevance in second language learning, which are currently under discussion, such as aptitude, motivation, language learning settings, the time and duration of language learning, the wider social and educational context in which the learning took place -- in sum, the information gathered from the interviewees was to be so detailed that an adequate picture of the general conditions under which successful language learning takes place could be achieved.

Outline of the Present Study

Chapter II will briefly describe the instrument, an interview questionnaire which consists of a semi-directed and directed part, the selection of subjects and general background information on them. The results of each part of the interview,

covering the total sample of subjects, will be presented separately. A list of language learning strategies and techniques will be compiled. A detailed discussion of the research instrument and the general results will follow; reference will be made to the various points raised in the previous section. In addition, the attempt will be made to develop a model which describes the second language learning process.

Chapter III will present and discuss nine case studies of successful language learners, and, as a contrast, one example of an unsuccessful language learner. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the identified strategies and techniques, and to examine the applicability of the tentative language learning model to the individual case studies. The case histories also serve the purpose of giving the reports on language learning experiences a realistic and authentic touch.

Chapter IV will briefly summarize the results, attempt to point out the practical implications and make some suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REPORT ON 34 CASE STUDIES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter I, very few attempts have hitherto been made at identifying characteristics, strategies and techniques of successful language learners by actually observing and/or interviewing learners (see Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975; Wesche, 1975; Hosenfeld, 1976). It was, therefore, decided to interview in detail successful language learners. It was hoped that these interviews would provide necessary information about successful language learning and also confirm, modify or disprove existing hypotheses and hunches about language learning, including such strategy inventories as had been prepared by Rubin and Stern (see p. 2 and 5).

Description of Instrument

An interview questionnaire was devised[1] which consisted of

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[1] The questionnaire had originally been designed in conjunction with the project "The Good Language Learner". Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1975. (Unpublished report)

a semi-directed part followed by a directed part. In the first part, the subjects were asked briefly to describe the history of their second language learning experiences, including topics such as the kind or number of languages they had learned or attempted to learn, the age at which the learning took place, the educational and socio-cultural context in which the language was acquired and the strategies or techniques they used or developed (see Appendix One, p. 219).

In the second more directed part of the interview, the interviewees were asked to put themselves into a hypothetical language learning situation. It was hoped that their responses would be determined by a combination of their previous experiences and insights and their present views and intuitions about language learning (see Appendix One, p. 219).

Some questions, statements and ideas, contained in both parts of the interviews, overlapped to a certain extent, since some interviewees, while reflecting upon their language learning experiences (Part I), offered information which was specifically asked for in the second part of the interview.

The rationale for each of the questions asked will be given in conjunction with the presentation of the results.

Subjects

A total of 34 interviewees was selected. No attempt was made to select subjects systematically from a given population. The interviewees were either personally known to the interviewers or had been recommended to them as highly proficient. No proficiency tests

were given to the subjects. Instead, in the course of the interview, they were presented with a chart describing various proficiency levels and asked to rate their second language competence accordingly.[1]

The general background information on the subjects chosen included sex, age, educational level, and occupation. Of the interviewees 59 per cent were male, 41 per cent female. The majority of the subjects were in the age group of 26-35 (68 per cent); 15 per cent were between 19-25; the rest were evenly distributed between the two age groups of 36-50 and 51-65. In this context, it can also be mentioned that the vast majority of the interviewees were born in the English-speaking parts of North America.

All of the interviewees, except one, had a university degree. It proved difficult to recruit subjects from different professional areas, such as business, industry, interpretation and translation services. Most of the interviewees came from the immediate university environment, e.g., from departments of curriculum, anthropology, linguistics, and modern languages. Among them were a few who were, or had recently been, language teachers at the high school or post-secondary level.

Although the focus of this study was on the good language learner, two unsuccessful learners were interviewed to provide a contrast. For the most part, a separate analysis of the information, offered by the two unsuccessful learners, was not necessary. Wherever

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[1] More details will be given in the results section.

applicable, special reference will be made to them.

Procedure

In advance of the interview, the potential interviewees received a letter asking if they would like to assist the study by volunteering for an interview (see Appendix Two). They were told that their personal language learning experience and their intuitions about second language learning would prove extremely helpful. They were assured that the interview did not involve any testing and that their names would not be disclosed in the study.

In the period from the end of February to the middle of May 1974, 34 interviews were held. The writer of the present report was assisted in the interviewing by another student. The first few interviews were conducted by both interviewers in order to standardize the interviewing procedures as much as possible.

The subjects were interviewed at a place convenient to them. The interviews were conducted in a very informal manner, and normally lasted between one to two hours. With the subjects' permission they were all recorded on tape and later transcribed, usually by the interviewer who had held the specific interview.

Results of Part I of the Interview

Since the interview consisted of two parts, the results will be presented separately for each part. Any given percentages refer to the total sample of 34 interviewees unless otherwise indicated.

Questions no. 2-4.[1] Since an individual's environment, the nuclear family as well as larger groups of society, is a potentially influencing factor in a person's language acquisition, it was considered necessary to inquire about the linguistic environment, the family and neighbourhood, in which the interviewee grew up.

A total of 79 per cent had a monolingual family background. Only 21 per cent were brought up in bi- or multilingual families.

For 76 per cent of the subjects the languages spoken in the family were either totally identical with those spoken in the neighbourhood or, if other languages were spoken, the interviewees had only very limited contact with their speakers. In most other cases the subjects' native language was one of many different languages which were spoken in a multilingual neighbourhood.

Questions no. 5, 8, 9 and 10. Other interesting aspects in the biographies of the interviewees were the kind of language they had learned, the number of languages (see Table 2), and the proficiency levels reached (see Table 2) and maintained.

The foreign/second language[2] most frequently mentioned was

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[1] Since this part of the interview was only minimally directed, not all the questions were asked systematically. Furthermore, some of the questions are only of significance in relation to the individual case history. Therefore, in this part only those results are presented which are of general importance with respect to the total sample.

[2] For the purposes of the present study the differentiation between foreign and second language learning was considered to be irrelevant. The terms are therefore used interchangeably.

French (29 times), closely followed by German and Spanish. Eighteen interviewees indicated that they had learned Latin. Among the other languages mentioned were -- in descending order of frequency --: Italian; English; Russian; Greek, Polish and Hebrew; Japanese and Swedish. A large variety of other not commonly taught languages, such as Cree, Mohawk, Icelandic, Thai, Tagalog, Arabic, was learned by only a few subjects (see, for example, case study eight and nine, Chapter III).

Before presenting Table 2, some explanatory remarks on the analysis of the data are necessary.

Regarding the number of languages learned (see Table 2), it has to be pointed out that the notion of language learning is used in a very general sense. It does not necessarily mean a systematic occupation with the language under consideration, for example, in the formal learning setting of school or university; the interviewee may have been exposed to the language and absorbed some aspects of it while travelling or living in the L2 country. Furthermore, the duration of the language learning process was not considered when the table was calculated. Therefore, languages to which the interviewees had only brief exposure were counted as well.

With respect to the question of 'maintenance' or 'retention' of the languages learned, the interviewees were presented with a chart describing the four skills of understanding, speaking, reading and writing with respect to four levels of proficiency, namely 'Below

Elementary', 'Elementary Proficiency', 'Working Knowledge' and 'Advanced or Native-like Knowledge' (see Table 1).[1] The subjects were invited to rate their own proficiency in each of the languages they had contact with. Although it had been intended in the original interview design to give the interviewees the opportunity to indicate their present level of proficiency, in other words, the maintenance level, as well as to ask them to indicate the level they had reached at the time of learning, several inconsistencies occurred in the actual interviews. Unfortunately, this inaccuracy cannot be remedied at this point. Table 2 will therefore refer only to the proficiency level reached and not to the maintenance level.

For the purposes of the analysis, an interviewee was considered to have reached a high proficiency level in a given language, when he reported that he had an 'advanced knowledge' or a 'working knowledge' in at least three of the four skills mentioned. Where only two skills under 'working knowledge' were indicated, a special symbol (½) was introduced. As the subjects were not given any proficiency tests but had to make a personal evaluation of their knowledge in relation to the classifications and descriptions of proficiency levels on the chart, the following table (Table 2) offers the interviewees' self-reported language comptence.

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[1]The definitions for the four levels of proficiency were adapted from Clark (1972).

TABLE 1

PROFICIENCY LEVELS

	Below Elementary	Elementary Proficiency	Working Knowledge	Advanced (native-like) Knowledge
derstanding		I can make essential sound discriminations; understand simple statements & questions on topics very familiar to me (meals, purchases, etc.); I can only understand utterances spoken at a slower rate than normal speech.	I can understand most casual conversations on familiar topics, related to my family, work, daily events, etc. I can get the gist of plays, films, radio, talks, etc.	I am able to follow conversations of native speakers (at normal speed); I can fully understand lectures, professional discussions, radio talks, plays, jokes, different language styles & dialects.
eaking		I can mimic most of the essential sounds characteristic of the language with fair accuracy; I can express elementary needs, e.g., order a meal, ask for directions; I make many errors but I am understood by native speakers who are used to dealing with foreign language speakers.	I can express myself on matters of concern to me with sufficient fluency and accuracy. To be understood by native speakers I may use circumlocutions; I can talk about daily events, my work, family, hobbies, etc.	I have a broad vocabulary; make few grammatical errors; I can participate in <u>any</u> conversation or discussion with high degree of fluency approximating native accent; I can express myself in different social situations (on different levels - colloquial & educated).
ading		I am able to read the script; I can read aloud <u>correctly</u> a simple text; I can read simple directions, common public signs, menus, elementary stories especially constructed for beginners, titles of books and captions, with or without a dictionary.	I can read writings of professional interest, familiar news items, magazine stories, popular modern fiction, e.g., detective stories (with occasional use of dictionary.)	I am able to read almost as easily as in native language material of considerable difficulty; literary writings, professional literature; I can read with almost no difficulty research articles and background readings in my field or profession (with occasional reference to dictionary.)
iting		I can write the script and copy simple sentences with ease; can compose simple sentences e.g., as demanded in elementary text-books.	I can write a simple "free" composition, such as a personal letter; can write memos, take messages or notes in my field.	I can write on subjects of concern to myself; e.g., reports on professional matters; I am able to deal with all personal and professional correspondence.

TABLE 2[1]

NUMBER OF LANGUAGES LEARNED AND NUMBER OF LANGUAGES IN WHICH A HIGH PROFICIENCY LEVEL HAD BEEN REACHED

No. of languages learned by each S.	• 1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	K 4	4	F 4	B 4	4	4	4	D 4
No. of languages with high profic. level	0	1	1 1/2	(1)	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	1 (1) 1/2 1/2	1	2

No. of languages learned by each S.	4	4	5	E 5	A 5	5	C 5	5	5	6	G 7	7	10	11	J 19	H 32	
No. of languages with high profic. level	(1)	3	1	1/2	1	3	1 1/2	3	3	3	1/2	4 1/2	3 1/2 1/2 1 1/2 1/2	2	4	6	

Legend

1/2 = only two skills were indicated under 'working knowledge'

• = the unsuccessful language learner

( )= language learning was actively in progress at time of interview and a high proficiency level had already been reached

A,B, etc. letters indicate the subjects whose case studies are presented in detail in Chapter III

The question of whether the subjects' ratings of their proficiency levels were absolutely accurate or not[2] was considered to be of minor significance, since the major purpose of the study was to investigate the conditions under which successful language

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[1]The sequence in all tables referring to the individual subjects is the same.

[2]It appears that self-ratings can be regarded as a fairly accurate measure of language competence. In the Montreal Study, for example, which attempted to measure the degree of bilingualism of grade six students, self-ratings were "found to be powerful predictors of the criterion measures" (Macnamara, 1969:86).

learning took place and what kind of strategies and techniques were developed and employed to achieve this goal.

Table 2 was included in the presentation of the results to give an overall picture of the interviewees' language learning attempts and their success rates. As shown in Table 2, the majority of the interviewees had learned between three to five languages; 21 per cent had learned three languages; 29 per cent had learned four languages and 21 per cent had learned five languages. The majority of the subjects interviewed had reached a proficiency level of at least a 'working knowledge' (in three skills) or above in one or two languages.

Question no. 6. In view of the current discussions about the optimal starting age for second language learning (see Burstall et al., 1974; Stern, 1976), the interviewees were asked when they had started to learn their first foreign language and for how long they had learned it.

The age levels ranged from seven to fifteen, with the most frequent age levels being twelve (32 per cent) and fourteen (26 per cent).

These data, however, do not indicate whether the languages which the interviewees had started at that age level were learned successfully, i.e., whether at least a 'working knowledge' (see chart, p. 18) had been achieved. It is interesting to note that of the total number of languages in which a high proficiency level (see Table 2) had been reached 41 per cent were begun later than

the normal high school age level. It appears that a young starting age is not an essential prerequisite for success in language learning (see also Burstall et al., 1974).

As length of exposure to a foreign language is thought to be one of the principal variables affecting achievement (e.g., Carroll, 1975:276f.), it was felt to be of interest to compare the amount of time each subject had occupied himself with all the different languages he had learned (see Table 3).

As shown in Table 3, the length of exposure to the different languages varied greatly. Most subjects achieved a high proficiency level (see definition on p. 17) in those languages which they had studied, more or less intensively, for more than seven years. It is interesting to note, however, that a high proficiency level had been reached in quite a number of languages despite the subjects' relatively brief involvement with these languages. On the basis of the interviews it can be argued that length of exposure alone is not the primary factor affecting achievement. What kind of factors the interviewees attributed their success to will be reported at a later point.

Question no. 7. Another factor in the complex interplay of variables influencing achievement in a foreign language appears to be the language learning environment, defined in terms of formal and informal settings. For illustrative purposes (see Table 4) formal language learning is differentiated into two major settings: (I) school, i.e., the languages were learned in the regular school system;

TABLE 3

SUBJECTS' LENGTH OF EXPOSURE TO LANGUAGES LEARNED (n = 34)

No. of languages learned by each S.	• 1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	K 4	4	F 4	B 4	4	4	4	D 4	4	4	5	E 5	A 5	5	C 5	5	5	6	G 7	7	10	11	J 19	H 32
up to 6 mos.								(1)			2				1				2	1	2(1)						* 2	1(1)	2	* 2	1/2	1 * 1	4	7	1
6 mos. - 1 yr.				1		(1)	1				1		* 1	1		* 2		1(1)			1	1/2			2	1		1	1 1/2	1 * 2	1	1/2	1	5	12 (1)
up to 2 yrs.		1	1/2	1	1	1						1		1						** 2				1	1	* 1			2		1	1/2		* 1	10 * 1
up to 3 yrs.							1			1			1		1							2	3	* 1	1/2									* 1
up to 4 yrs.					1				1					1		1	1	* 1	1				1	* 1			1	* 1				1	* 1	* 1
up to 5 yrs.	1				* 1					1		1						* 1	* (1)			1		1		* 1		* 1		* 1		2	1	** 2
up to 6 yrs.											1		1		1														1				1	* 1
up to 7 yrs.		* 1										1	1			* (1)	1/2																	
over 7 yrs.			* 1	* (1)		* 1	* 1	* 1	** 2	* 1		* 1		* 1	* 1		* 1 1/2			* 1	* 1	1	* 1	* 1	* 1	* 1	* 1	** 2	* 1		* 1	** 2	** 2	* 1	
length unknown								1																		1				1/2	1	* 2	2

Legend: * = a high prof. level has been reached in one language

** = a high prof. level has been reached in both languages

½ = two skills indicated under 'working knowledge' have been achieved

· = the unsuccessful language learner

( )= language learning was in progress at time of interview

(II) university; the languages may have been initiated in school and continued at university; or they may have been taken at university for the first time.

Following the two types of formal settings, four further language learning environments are outlined. Row III indicates that language learning took place in an informal non-school situation, involving 'immersion'[1] into the target language, which in most cases meant being in the L2 country itself.

Row IV refers to self-study; although basically a form of formal learning, it differs from the two major formal settings previously mentioned in that the learner has much more control over the content of his learning, and his study time, etc.; this type of learning was frequently combined with learning in an informal situation.

Row V indicates another combination possibility: a formal setting within an 'immersion' situation, for example, taking a course in the country of the target language. The last row (VI) stands for formal settings other than those mentioned above, mainly in adult education, such as evening courses at culture institutes representing foreign countries, courses at military academies, and classes for civil servants or private tuition. The table also allows for the indication of sequence and combinations of language learning settings.

As illustrated in Table 4, it is apparent that most language

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[1]The term 'immersion' does not refer to school 'immersion programs' in which L2 is the language of instruction.

TABLE 4

LANGUAGE LEARNING SETTINGS

Language Learning Settings \ Total number of languages learned	• 1	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	K • 4	4	F 4	B 4	4	4	4	D 4	4	4	5	E 5	A 5	5	C 5	5	5	6	G 7	7	10*	11	J 19	H 32
Formal Settings — I school	a^1	a b^1	a^1	ab c^1	ab c^1	ab^1	ab c^1	a b^1	a b^1c^1	ab^1	a^1	a b^1 c^1	abc	ab d^1	ab c^1	ab^1	$a^1b^1c^1$ d^1	a^1	a^1		ab^1	a b^1	c^1 d^1 e	a^1 b d^1	a	b^1 c^1 d	a^1 $b^{1,3}$	a c d^2	a^1 b c	b^1 f	1 a^1 b^1	a^1 b^1 c^2 2	a^1	
Formal Settings — II univ.	$a^{2,4}$	b^2	a^2 b^1	c^2	c^2		$c^{2,4}$	b^2	$b^{2,4,6,8}$ $c^{2,4}$	c^1	a^2	b^2 c^2 d		d^2	c^2		d^2	a^2 b^1 c	b		c^1	b^2 c	$c^{3,5}$	a^2 e^2	b^1 c^1	a^3 b^2 c^2 e	a^3 b^4 c^2	d^5 (f)	a^2 e $f^{1,5}$	a^2 b^2 c^1	a^2 2	a^2 b^4 c^3	a^2b^2 c^2 d^1 f^1g^1 6	$b^{2,4}$ e^2 g^2	f^2 17
Informal settings or combinations of formal and informal settings — III informal		b^3	a^3	c^3		b^2	c^3	b^3	b^9 c^5	b^3	a^3 b^2 c^1	c^3	d^2		c^3	b^2 c^1d^2	a^2 b^2 c^2	b^2 (d)	a^2 c	abc	b^2	d^1	c^7 d^2	a^3	b^2 c^2 d e	$a^{2,5}$ b^3	a^2 $b^{2,5}$ c^4 d e	a^1 e	f^4 g	b^3 c^2 d^1 $e^{1,3}$ g	1 b^2 d^1 e^1	$b^{3,6}$ 1 a^3	b^3 d^4 f^2 g^2 (1)4	b^3 c^1 a^2 $d^{1,2}$ e^1	$f^{1,3}$ g^1 e^4 h^1 (1)1
Informal settings or combinations of formal and informal settings — IV self-study										b^2 c^2	b^1 c^1		$d^{1,3}$			c^1d^2			d	d	$(c)^2$									d^1 e^2	1 d^1 e^1	c^1 d^1 4	$b^{1,2}$ c^1 d^2 e^1	b^1 c^1 a^2 d^1 e^1	f^1 g^1 h^1 3
Informal settings or combinations of formal and informal settings — V informal & instruction	a^3								$b^{3,5,7}$ c^3					c^2								d^2	$c^{2,4}$ c^6			$a^{1,4}$		a^2 b d^4	f^3		c^2		d^3	e^3
Other — VI other		b^4	b^2	$(c)^4$	c^3	(c)		c			d		d^4	c^1	d	(b)^3			(a)^3		de	e	a b	c e^1			$c^{1,3}$	$d^{1,3}$	d f^2	a^1	a^1 c^1	$b^{2,5}$ d^2	c^3 e^2 1	2

Legend:

a,b... = in order to differentiate between languages they are symbolized by a letter.

$a^1;a^2,...$ = the indices of the letters indicate the sequence of the learning settings; if the indices are the same, the different learning settings were combined.

* = For subjects who have learned 10 or more languages only those languages that have been learned in different settings are designated by a letter. Languages which were studied only in one setting are grouped together and designated by numerals.

• = the unsuccessful language learner

( ) = language learning in progress

learning was initiated in a formal setting, more precisely speaking, in school. The majority of the subjects continued studying at least one or two languages at university. The density of symbols in row III illustrates that most language learners were exposed to an informal, free-learning situation at some point in their language learning process.

On the basis of Table 4 it is impossible to judge which of the two basic language learning settings, the formal or the informal one, had a greater impact on the achievement level reached in the languages learned. There is some evidence in the interviews, however, that those subjects who learned a language in the country of the target language, though frequently combined with self-study, usually acquired it successfully. However, in a few cases interviewees did not achieve well in an informal learning situation. These exceptional incidents were generally attributed to a lack of interest and motivation or to too brief a period of exposure to the language.

As the majority of the interviewees in the instructed situations had been taught in a traditional way, the emphasis having been on grammar and translation, many subjects (38 per cent) commented on the fact that, at the end of high school, they lacked in oral skills. In retrospect, several interviewees, who had achieved high marks in their language courses in school, now attached little significance to this aspect of success, as they felt that they were not able to speak the language they had learned, or if so, only haltingly.

There were, however, a few subjects who benefitted greatly from the formal learning situation in high school and/or university

and 'flourished linguistically', so to speak. Nevertheless, a greater number of interviewees (32 per cent) experienced a 'linguistic breakthrough' in an 'immersion' situation after attempts at language learning in a formal setting which had been of limited success.

Generally speaking, it can be said that, independent of how successful or unsuccessful the interviewees had been in formal learning situations, in most cases their oral/aural competence increased considerably, when they found themselves in 'immersion' situations, i.e., in contact with native speakers.

The only exceptions which have to be mentioned at this point are the unsuccessful language learners. They did not profit from an immersion situation; one of them, who attended a course in the L2 environment, was dissatisfied with the quality of the teachers and the teaching and with the lack of contact with native speakers. The other interviewee, when travelling through Europe, did not seek opportunities to improve her foreign language competence, but accepted her low level of competence.

Question no. 11. Towards the end of the first part of the interview the subjects were asked whether they were satisfied with their achievement levels in the different languages.

Most subjects, including the two unsuccessful language learners, indicated that they would like to increase their knowledge in at least one language, sometimes in the language in which they were already fairly competent and sometimes in one in which they had not reached a satisfactory level. Two interviewees indicated that there

had to be a concrete reason for doing so, not merely an interest in languages per se: "I'm so sick of snobbish polyglottism."

Question no. 12. Another factor supposedly operating in second language learning is aptitude. Though the interviewees were not given any aptitude tests, it was nevertheless considered to be of value to tap their introspection and to find out whether they thought they had a gift for languages.

When questioned, 44 per cent answered that they regard themselves as "strong" in languages; 21 per cent put themselves into the category of average ability; 29 per cent denied having a gift for languages; 6 per cent did not know. One interviewee, for example, who had learned a considerable number of languages remarked that he did not have a gift for languages, but that he had acquired a skill in learning languages. Another subject pointed out that the crucial factors in language learning were not the possession of aptitude, but personal determination and willingness to apply oneself to the task and, above all, a strong motivation.

With regard to the two poor learners, one of them considered herself to be weak in languages, the other one felt she had average ability.

Subsequent to this more general question the interviewees were asked about certain principal features of aptitude, as identified for example by Carroll and Sapon (1959), such as auditory discrimination, rote memory and inductive learning ability (Questions no. 12.1-12.4).

Of the subjects, 69 per cent* [1] felt that they had a good ear for languages; 19 per cent said they did not. Three respondents indicated they did not know and one interviewee felt that his 'good ear' was only average. In addition, 50 per cent stated that they had a good memory; 16 per cent claimed the opposite. The remaining subjects qualified their answers by specifying to which aspects of language learning their good or bad memory referred. Four subjects, for example, reported that they could remember sounds but not words. When asked if they liked analyzing languages, 66 per cent responded positively, 28 per cent negatively; 6 per cent of the interviewees were undecided.

Question no. 13. As indicated by some of the interviewees' general comments on aptitude, mentioned above, individual subjects attributed their success in language learning to different factors. In order to investigate which circumstances the interviewees themselves regarded as most influential or decisive, they were asked to judge in retrospect, if they would attribute their success to the teachers or to the way of teaching, to the school or the environment, to some special study habits which they might have developed, or to some particular personality characteristics.

All interviewees mentioned a combination of factors which contributed to their success in language learning. One interviewee, for example, believed that, due to his bilingual upbringing he had an

---

[1] * Adjusted frequency— data missing.

insight into the nature of language, and a general mental flexibility. He did not feel confused or disturbed by the 'oddity' of the foreign language he was learning, as he knew that both his native languages (French and Arabic) were extremely different. He felt he had acquired a positive attitude towards languages. In addition, to this general 'linguistic' open-mindedness he regarded the immersion situation as the most influential factor in the acquisition process of the first foreign language he had learned.

Among those aspects most frequently reported were motivation (47 per cent) and immersion into the target language (44 per cent). Motivation was occasionally specified by indicating an "integrative orientation" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:14), for example, an interest in the culture of the target language (9 per cent), or an "instrumental orientation", for example, professional advancement (9 per cent). Another variable frequently referred to was a positive attitude towards languages per se or towards one particular language (34 per cent).

Among other factors mentioned were positive parental influence, insight into the nature of languages, bilingual upbringing, and multilingual and multicultural environments. Effective study habits or appropriate approaches to language learning which suited the individuals' learning styles constituted other aspects in the complex of influential factors.

Among personality characteristics mentioned by the interviewees, sociability was regarded as an important factor in learning a language (31 per cent). Several interviewees (22 per cent)

indicated that being extroverted facilitated acquiring a foreign language, especially oral skills. Lack of self-confidence, inhibition (self-consciousness) were named as characteristics bearing a negative effect on the language learning process. An interesting phenomenon, which could be called 'social sensitivity', was experienced by three interviewees. They were afraid of imposing themselves upon native speakers by attempting to slowly utter a few words. As one subject put it:

> I am not a very forceful person.., I don't impose myself too much... they have to listen to my idiotic attempts to say 'Where's the bathroom?'.

The two unsuccessful language learners attributed their failure in language learning to a certain extent to the poor quality of teachers and teaching. One of the interviewees further indicated that she had convinced herself of having a low language learning aptitude, as she always had great difficulty in pronunciation and comprehension.

Results of Part II of the Interview

The second part of the interview was more directed than the first in that the interviewees were generally expected to restrict their responses to the questions asked. A number of specific questions had been developed in preparation of the interviews. However, if the interviewer regarded it as appropriate, additional questions were formulated. As indicated in the description of the instrument (see p. 11), the interviewees were asked to put themselves into a hypothetical language learning situation. Thus an attempt was made to combine their recollections of past language learning experiences with their present insights (see Appendix One, Questionnaire Part II).

Question no. I.[1] Research in recent years investigated the role of attitude in second language acquisition (see Gardner and Lambert, 1972) and demonstrated that students' attitudes are related to second language achievement. Although most of the components of the attitude measures are of socio-psychological nature, the instruments usually also contain more general aspects, e.g., interest in foreign languages, task-orientation.

In order to investigate the interviewees' attitudes towards the (hypothetical) prospect of learning another language, the following question was asked:

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[1] Occasionally, the presentation of the results follows the logical flow of the argument and not the original sequence of the questions.

Imagine that you had the opportunity and time to learn another language now. What would you be inclined to say at the thought of learning a new language?

1. I hate the thought of it.
2. It scares me.
3. I don't mind doing it.
4. I would look forward to doing it.
5. I am very excited at the idea of it.

The great majority of the 34 interviewees had a very positive attitude towards the idea of learning another language-- 38 per cent looked forward to learning another language; 44 per cent were indeed very excited about the prospect. Two interviewees stated that they were not interested in learning another language, as they preferred to increase their knowledge of a language in which they had not yet achieved full competence, indicating in this way their abiding interest in language learning.

A great variety of reasons influenced the interviewees' choice of a particular language for the hypothetical learning situation; a few had a general or specific linguistic, or a personal interest in the language chosen. For example, one interviewee was interested in learning an African language because her ancestors came from Africa. For some, the language had an "aesthetic" or "exotic" appeal. Another subject felt attracted by the different ways of perceiving reality through a foreign language. Several interviewees indicated a political reason. For example, learning French in Canada was felt to be essential because it is a bilingual country. A few revealed an "instrumental orientation", in that they felt that learning a second language allowed one to get a better job; whereas

several subjects showed an "integrative orientation" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972: 14), in that they were interested in the target country and its people. Several others displayed a positive attitude towards language learning per se, with no particular reasons influencing their choice of one language over another.

When asked to choose a particular language they would like to learn, many of the interviewees also mentioned specific goals they wanted to achieve in their language learning. The majority of them indicated that they would like to put their emphasis on the aural/oral skills (speaking and understanding the foreign language).

Question no. II. Language teaching theorists and practitioners frequently discuss the question of the most effective language learning setting: the classroom or the natural environment in which the language is spoken. Their opinions are rather diversified. Some maintain that language learning should be taken out of the classroom altogether (see Macnamara, 1973); others take a more moderate view and believe in a combination of formal and informal learning environments (see Stern, 1970 & 1973); research has provided some evidence that formal instruction enhances the level of achievement reached in the foreign language (see Krashen and Seliger, 1975; and 1976 in press). Teaching the foreign language via other subjects, as is the case in the Canadian 'immersion' programs, is another possible solution to provide opportunities for genuine communication (see Swain, 1974).

In view of the current discussions, the interviewees, who had

learned one or more languages successfully, were asked under what conditions they would ideally like to go about learning the new language. They were presented with the following question:

What would you like to do first of all?

1. Travel to the country and simply immerse yourself in the language?
2. Travel to the country and take a language course there?
3. Buy a course and study by yourself?
4. Go to a teacher or a language school for private lessons?
5. Join a language class?
6. A combination of these?
7. Other.

When presented with several different approaches towards the new language learning task, 39 per cent* [1] chose the alternative of going to the country and taking a language course there, i.e., a combination of a formal and informal learning setting. On the other hand, 39 per cent indicated that they would prefer some kind of instruction to start with, including self-instruction, private lessons or a language class. All of the subjects who had opted for initial formal instruction indicated that they intended to immerse themselves into the target language subsequent to their instruction period. A few subjects indicated that they would like to learn the new language via a job, for example. They would choose a 'functional approach' to language learning.

Question II.1. This question dealt with the problem of

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[1]* Adjusted frequencies due to incomplete data are designated by an asterisk.

distribution of time in language learning. Is it of greater advantage to the learner to study the language intensively, e.g., several hours a day, or gradually, e.g., 30 minutes a day. Research has so far not produced conclusive results (see Carroll, 1975; Stern et al., 1976). It was therefore felt to be of general interest to ask the interviewees the following question:

> If time were no consideration, would you prefer to learn the language in a concentrated effort (e.g., an intensive course for 4 weeks) or gradually (e.g., 2 hours a week and homework)?

On the basis of their experience, 85 per cent* of the interviewees felt that a concentrated effort and intensive study would be most beneficial to them initially in learning the new language. However, the degree of intensity, indicated in their responses, varied from all-day-long courses to different combinations of course and homework, and informal, unstructured exposure to the language and culture, for example, going to the theatre or meeting native speakers.

Question no. IV. It is frequently discussed whether the language learner should initially be allowed to be a 'receptive' participant in the classroom, in order to become attuned to the new language, or whether he should be compelled to produce the language, i.e., to be an 'active' participant, from the very beginning of his language learning.

In support of a 'receptive' participation, comparisons are sometimes drawn with first language acquisition (see Asher, 1972; Macnamara, n.d.; Taylor, 1974). One frequently hears an argument like the following one:

> Watch a small child's speech development. First he listens, then he speaks. Understanding always precedes speaking.
>
> (Stern, 1970:58)

Although listening and understanding are no longer regarded as "purely 'receptive' or 'passive' processes"--the individual selects what he listens to--the "relative order of listening and understanding preceding the productive use of language" was, until recently, widely accepted as a 'natural' order (Stern, 1970:61).

In order to elicit the interviewees' opinion on this matter, which would presumably be based upon their language learning experience, the following question was asked:

> Some of the ways of learning a language seem to involve you as a learner more actively (for example, in some cases you are made to speak right from the start), others allow you to be more passive (for example, you just listen to the teacher or you read widely).
>
> Generally speaking, would you prefer to be relatively passive or rather active in the early stages of language learning?

On the interviewees, 82 per cent considered it best to be active right from the beginning, regardless of certain personality characteristics they might have, such as shyness, that would tend to make them follow a more passive approach. As one interviewee put it:

> I would try to get involved as much as possible... Language is a skill you've got to use all the time. The best way of learning a skill is by using it, doing it, by practising it... Participation seems really essential... What the heck, you might as well just get up and make a fool of yourself.

However, as one of our interviewees, who is representative

of the opinions of a few others, indicated, the option for activity did not have to totally exclude passive moments:

> If you're studying a language for a long time, a bit of passivity at the beginning is not bad, because you have time to think and form hypotheses.

Question no. III. The next question touched the problem of 'stages' in language learning. There exist many definitions of achievement levels, referring to the ultimate language command (see Clark, 1972; The Gillin Report, 1974). Very few attempts, however, have been made to describe stages in language learning (see Wilkins, 1972, van Ek, 1975).

The question of whether the language learner himself experiences different stages in his learning has never been investigated. The interviewees were therefore questioned as to how they would interpret the notion of 'stages' based upon their personal language learning experience. A total of 67 per cent* of the interviewees agreed that they could actually differentiate between several stages in their language learning process. However, when asked to describe them, they expressed a great diversity of views about the characteristics of language learning stages.

Some interviewees, for example, referred to a change in competence, motivation or in their personal perception of difficulty and progress. Others regarded the differences between stages in terms of learning content. One interviewee felt that differences were externally imposed through the program (course), the setting, and the way of teaching.

Many language learners immediately rejected the idea of three stages; 41 per cent* seemed to have experienced two stages rather than three (19 per cent*). For example, the initial stage was characterized by a great effort to establish "a basis in vocabulary and grammar". Passing through the second stage meant building "on this platform". One interviewee described her experience as follows:

> It was very difficult up to a major hurdle, and then it became easier, there was more familiar material, the ratio of familiarity grew as I advanced.

Where a third stage was mentioned, it was usually defined in terms of refinement. One interviewee described this stage as "a matter of gaining fluency, of bringing sophistication to your linguistic skills". One might use the descriptive headings offered by one subject as an illustration of how several of the interviewees viewed the concept of "three stages" in language learning. These were:

Stage 1) assimilation of new linguistic material

Stage 2) implementation and practice of these aspects

Stage 3) refinement

Those who disagreed with the idea of stages argued that one's personal approach basically remained the same at all stages: "It's only a question of degree, ... the same things are involved -- pronunciation,... grammar, and finally the usage." The language learning process was further described by five interviewees as a "continuum", without any sharply divided stages. Another subject described her language learning process as going in "leaps and plateaus".

Question no. III.1. Material developers and language teachers are constantly confronted with the problem of content of their language courses. Most language materials have recently introduced spoken language and everyday topics in order to make language learning more meaningful to the student. However, the question of what should best be introduced first to make language learning most effective is not resolved.

The interviewees were therefore presented with several choices (see Table 5) and asked to indicate what they would like to learn at the initial stages of language learning. The following table illustrates the distribution of preference for language learning content at the beginning stage of learning.

All interviewees, but one, opted for a combination of the different choices presented. Seventy-one per cent said they would choose to mainly learn the pronunciation in the early stages, 68 per cent checked off simple conversational phrases. The second and third most frequently selected aspects were learning to understand the spoken language (65 per cent) and getting an overview of the grammar (62 per cent). One interviewee expressed the desire to be immersed in a "speeded-up natural process", learning the language "like a child". He did not indicate any of the above-mentioned possibilities.

Question no. III.2. Considering that most of the subjects had successfully acquired one or more foreign languages, it was felt to be of interest to investigate if they would nevertheless prefer "to be

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF PREFERENCES AT THE INITIAL STAGES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING (n=34)

I'd mainly like:	•											K		F		B				D				E	A		C				G					J	H
1) to learn to understand the spoken language.	x	ⓧ				x	x	x	x		x								x		ⓧ	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	ⓧ	ⓧ	x	x	x			x
2) to learn to read.	x	x				x			x	x												x						x	x	x						x
3) to learn the pronunciation.		x	x		x	x	x	x	x			ⓧ			x	x	x	x	x		ⓧ	x		x		x	x		x	x	ⓧ	x	ⓧ			x
4) to learn simple conversational phrases.	x	ⓧ	x			ⓧ	x	x	x			ⓧ	ⓧ		x			x	x	x			x	x	x		x		ⓧ	x		ⓧ	x	x	x
5) to learn how to write the language.	x	x				x			x			x	x														x		x						x
6) to get an overview of the grammar.	x	x			x				ⓧ			x	x			x	x		x		ⓧ		x	x			x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
7) to learn about the cultural background.		x							x	x	x									ⓧ					x		x	x	x					x	x
8) I would like a combination of the above.	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9) Other.				x																																

Legend: ◯ indicating particular emphasis on a certain aspect at the very beginning stages.

• the unsuccessful language learners.

A,B, etc. letters indicating the interviewees whose individual case studies are presented in detail in Chapter III.

firmly guided" by a teacher or a course or if they would rather be left to their "own devices" and learn the language in their own way.

At the initial stages of language learning 82 per cent of the interviewees regarded it as necessary to be guided by a teacher, who would give them advice, organize and structure the learning material for them, motivate them and help them to persist. There were differing opinions, however, regarding the intensity and firmness of the teacher's guidance. Some wished total guidance while others merely wanted the teacher to be present and act as a resource person if needed. However, 59 per cent, the majority, tended towards wanting fairly firm guidance by the teacher.

Question no. V. In order to investigate if the emphasis would shift to different language aspects with time, the interviewees were further asked what they would like to learn at an intermediate or advanced level.

Many subjects indicated that they would like to emphasize reading and writing, to expand their vocabulary (including more idioms and different registers) and to improve their communicative competence in different social situations. Generally speaking, they would like to immerse themselves into the target language and culture.

Question no. VI. As Stern pointed out (see p. 4), the learner has the choice between "rational and intuitive learning". He has to decide whether he "should treat the language learning task

intellectually, conceptually, and systematically as a mental problem, or whether he should avoid thinking about the language and absorb the language more intuitively" (Stern, 1974:26). Stern suggests that the good language learner handles this dilemma to his advantage.

It was therefore of great interest to ask the interviewees how they viewed the language learning process on the basis of their experience. They were presented with this issue in the following manner:

> Some people say that you cannot make a conscious effort in learning a foreign language. They hate to study grammar; they say you must simply allow the language to sink in gradually.
>
> Others argue that language learning is a conscious and systematic process. You set about it by studying, by constantly asking for explanations and rules. In short, by actively thinking about it.
>
> Which of these ideas would more represent your point of view?

The vast majority of the interviewees (94 per cent) agreed that their language learning was either a highly conscious and systematic process (68 per cent) or that it comprised both conscious and unconscious elements (26 per cent). One interviewee commented:

> You have to simply sit down and work out a way that you can do it and spend a lot of time at it and expect not to get very far for a while and expect to have a lot of setbacks and to get boring work to do a lot of times, but it just depends how badly you want it.

One interviewee regarded it as possible to learn through "osmosis... if you have got unlimited time and an optimum situation".

But as very few learners learn under those ideal conditions,

the reality of language learning is quite different. As pointed out by another interviewee, "there is an unconscious process of absorption going on all the time... But there has to be practice, questioning...; just absorbing the language doesn't get you very far." It may be significant that those two interviewees who regarded language learning as a totally unconscious process were the two unsuccessful language learners.

Question no. VII. Another problem the learner has to face when learning a second language is that of the "discrepancy between L1 and L2" (Stern, 1974:25). The presence of the first language (and possibly other languages) is "inevitable and deep-seated". The learner has to decide whether he should consciously attempt to suppress L1 references -- as far as this is possible -- or whether he should utilize this reference system.

In order to find out how the interviewees had coped with this problem, they were asked the following question:

> Some people find that in learning a new language you must completely forget your native language. Others say you cannot and should not.
>
> To what extent do you find that comparing your native language with the foreign language helps you in learning a new language?

In general, it was seen as inevitable and, simultaneously, as useful to compare the new language with the mother tongue, but usually more at the initial stages of language learning than at the later ones. The following two comments illustrate this point of view:

> Instead of approaching the language like a blank wall... try to find everything that you can that is related to what you already know, especially in lexical items.
>
> Initially, one's native language is useful; but after you've reached a certain level of proficiency one tends to completely forget one's own language... I become one of them and I completely exclude English.

The interviewees were also questioned about their attitudes towards the usefulness of translating into the native language (see Question no. VII,i). Only 26 per cent* considered this activity as useless or as a hindering element in the assimilation of the new language. On the other hand, the remaining subjects generally regarded translating as useful to a certain extent. Some interviewees felt that translation could be used as a "checking tool" for comprehension, especially at the beginner's level in a formal learning situation.

As learners are very often advised to use monolingual dictionaries which offer explanations in the foreign language, rather than bilingual dictionaries, the interviewees were asked about their preference (see Question no. VII.2). The majority of the interviewees preferred to work with a bilingual dictionary. Many subjects modified their response by stating that a bilingual dictionary was necessary at the initial stages of language learning, but recommended that a monolingual dictionary be introduced at a later point. Only six subjects opted for using monolingual dictionaries right from the beginning.

Question no. IX. As most of the interviewees had learned more than one foreign language, their perception of a possible negative or positive influence on the learning process of each individual language was considered to be of general interest. They were therefore presented with the following question:

> If you have learned a third or fourth language, to what extent did you find that your learning was influenced by your previous language learning experience?
>
> In general, would you say that knowing another foreign language helped you or hindered you in learning a new language?

Of the interviewees 73 per cent* had experienced a definite influence: "the compartments in the mind are not completely watertight". Only 9 per cent* denied that their learning of another language was influenced by their previous language learning experience.

For 78 per cent of the 27 respondents who commented on the quality of this influence, the effect had been a positive one. "As I learned languages, I learned how to learn them." Not only were personal strategies and suitable techniques developed, but, as another subject expressed it, one's mind became flexible to the idea that there were completely different ways of conceptualizing. Another influencing factor was mentioned by two other subjects. They had felt a positive reinforcement through success and each further language was approached with a more relaxed and confident attitude.

Four interviewees pointed out that the influence of one language on the other could be both positive and negative. When learning languages from the same linguistic families (e.g., Romance

or Slavic languages), cross-lingual comparisons facilitated comprehension and production, but they also provided some "mix-up", especially at the early stages.

> Each language learned makes the next one easier, because you are more detached from your native language, you have more knowledge about structure, about metalanguage. However, there is also some interference, for example, in the area of vocabulary.

Only two interviewees regarded the influence as negative, in that the negative feelings of inadequacy and failure, as experienced previously, were transferred to the new language learning situation.

Question no. VIII. As Stern pointed out, the ideal endpoint of second language learning is native-like competence, which is characterized by the "intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meanings expressed by language forms" (Stern, 1974:16). The layman usually refers to this level of competence by indicating that the learner has learned to 'think' in the foreign language. In order to elicit the subjects' views and experiences in this matter, the following questions were asked:

> Do you feel that one can actually learn to think in a foreign language?
>
> How do you think one might achieve that?
>
> How important do you think it is?

Of the interviewees, 79 per cent agreed that it was possible to learn to think in a foreign language. For ten subjects learning to think in a foreign language was an unconscious process. They felt that it

could be equated with a certain degree of competence that came with the facility developed in the foreign language: "It just clicks one day after you've had enough."; "It just happens or it doesn't."

The majority of our interviewees, however, achieved thinking in the foreign language by conscious efforts of practising and using the language; for example, by soliloquizing in the foreign language, or if the opportunity arose, by immersing themselves into the foreign language environment.

Question no. XI.[1] During the entire interview it became apparent that most subjects had to cope with certain affective demands made upon them by learning a language. Psycholinguists and language teaching theorists have discussed affective variables in second language acquisition (see Brown, 1973; Rubin, 1975; Stern, 1975). At the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked about certain feelings concerning their language learning experiences.

The first question referred to the feelings of discouragement, frustration, impatience and/or confusion, caused by the difficulties of the language learning task.

Of the interviewees, 85 per cent had experienced some or all of these feelings, especially the feeling of frustration. Discouragement (eight subjects) and confusion (three subjects) had been experienced more at the beginning of their language learning careers than at later stages. Five interviewees stressed the fact

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[1] Replies to Question no. X (techniques) will be reported in the following section, subsequent to a list of identified strategies.

that these negative feelings were not continually present, but occurred only at intervals. Many of the interviewees pointed out that they accepted these feelings as somehow inevitable, occasionally, even as helpful in that they motivated them to learn more in order to overcome them. Persistence appeared as a key word in the process of coping with these affective demands.

> Persist! There's lots of plateaus... just keep on going... try more, until it happens.
>
> Be realistic! Take them (the feelings of frustration and impatience, etc.) with a pinch of salt and learn a little more of the language.

In his paper Stern (1974) stated:

> While first-language knowledge is extremely compelling and completely self-evident, many features of the new language... appear, to begin with, as arbitrary, artificial, unnatural and sometimes as finicky, fussy, and often plainly ridiculous.

The question of emotional reactions towards the language itself was put to the interviewees. For the most part, they felt that the foreign language did not sound strange to them. One interviewee, however, mentioned that all the languages (about 12) he had learned sounded 'absurd', but that it did not bother him: "It's part of their charm."

Occasionally, the sound of the language provided an amusing element at the beginning of their language learning career. A few interviewees regarded the language as interesting or aesthetically pleasing. Two subjects learned a language despite considering it as aesthetically displeasing. It was felt, however, that to belittle the language would be an expression of disrespect for the native

speakers of the language. One interviewee felt very strongly about this aspect:

> Nothing is peculiar... When learning a foreign language, one thing never to do is to say 'Why do we have to do it that way?' Humility in the most extreme variety is required -- no matter what they do it is right if they do it.

The last sub-question attempted to uncover emotional factors, such as inhibition and/or helplessness, which might operate when a language learner has to use the language in a communicative situation. When actually using the foreign language, a few learners (6) commented on the fact that they did feel ridiculous expressing themselves in the foreign language, but usually this feeling was only temporary. It usually occurred at the beginning, or later, only from time to time.

One interesting comment came from one subject who remarked that although not feeling ridiculous speaking the language, she felt "phony", as if her personality had changed into something "artificial". Another interviewee reported that, once native speakers of the foreign language responded positively to his attempts at communication, he no longer felt ridiculous.

Feelings of inhibition or embarrassment were other experiences which were shared by about half of our interviewees. Eight learners had felt helpless from time to time when they had to communicate in the foreign language. Some learners indicated that they were less inhibited among fellow students than among native speakers. It was often recommended (see Techniques) that in order to learn to communicate one should choose a native speaker who would be a friend

because communication in such a situation would be less anxiety-provoking.

Again it was felt to be of particular interest to investigate the kind of coping mechanisms the interviewees had developed over the years.

Many subjects emphasized that one had to be active. It was essential to increase one's efforts and, generally speaking, to persist. Several subjects overcame their inhibition by consciously seeking out communicative situations where there was no other choice but to talk in the foreign language:

> What hindered me a great deal was my reticence, awkwardness, shyness... I really had to force myself... I would go through the cafeteria (at Kiel University, Germany) and all the tables would be taken. I'd try to find somebody, preferably alone, in order to start a conversation. I found it very difficult and I don't know if I would find it any easier now, but it certainly helped my German.

Others consciously accepted those feelings, deciding not to let it "bug" them when they made mistakes and people laughed at them. Two subjects advocated maintaining a sense of humour:

> I am not particularly extroverted; but when it comes to learning a language I think you've got to have a sense of humour, you've got to be able to laugh at your own mistakes, you cannot take yourself seriously.

Or, as the other interviewee commented:

> In order to learn you must make mistakes. People with whom you speak are not going to be surprised if you make mistakes -- it's not going to upset them. People are delighted if you can speak their language, and they don't care how well you speak it.

Language Learning Strategies and Techniques

A major purpose in analyzing the interviews was the identification of language learning strategies and techniques. As previously mentioned, Stern's list of strategies (see p. 5) provided an initial frame of reference. As a result of the interviews conducted the list of strategies was modified and extended according to the statements and views expressed by the interviewees.

Language learning strategies. The analysis focused on the most salient features of the interviews. The strategies identified are presented in Table 6. The super-ordinate strategies, which could also be called general learning descriptors, refer to the overall approach to language learning and appear to be essential characteristics of successful language acquisition. The following more specific strategies are not necessarily applicable to all successful language learners. They form a composite picture of a good language learner, as suggested by the interviewees' strategies. In a real language learning situation each individual selects from among those strategies according to his own personal characteristics and learning styles.

TABLE 6

STRATEGIES OF GOOD LANGUAGE LEARNERS (GLLs)

(The statements or actual quotations following the strategies are selected from the interviews for illustrative purposes).

TABLE 6 (continued)

STRATEGY 1: ACTIVE TASK APPROACH

GLLs actively involve themselves in the language learning task:

(a) by responding positively to the given learning opportunities or by identifying and seeking preferred learning environments and exploiting these.

(Subject #12 accepted the rigid way of teaching at high school, as this method provided him with the foundations for different languages; the method demanded rote learning, memorizing and learning by heart on the student's part.)

(Subject #23 knows -- through her previous language learning experience -- that she needs structure and organization, especially at the beginning, and both formal and informal settings to learn a foreign language. Before immersing herself into the target language, she would, for example, take a crash course; in addition to the informal learning situation in the country itself, she would continue with formal instruction.)

(b) by adding related language learning activities to the regular program and/or intensifying their efforts.

(In addition to courses subject #20 read a lot, though he did not look up unknown words; "one must read something -- in the foreign language -- continually, every day.")

(Subject #13 actively pursued the learning of French outside the classroom; he listened to linguaphone records and tapes in the car, read French novels, etc.)

(c) by engaging in a number of practice activities.

(In order to practise correct pronunciation, subject # 24 tried to "isolate behaviourally certain sounds"; "she would look at people's mouth" and "then repeat it over and over again".)

(In order to learn vocabulary, subject #5 memorized the words, wrote them down as an aid to memory.)

(Other practice techniques are given in the list of techniques, presented in the following section. The importance of practice was emphasized by several interviewees. Subject #13, for example, considered practice to be the most useful part of the conscious effort one can make in learning a language.)

(d) by identifying individual problems connected with their language learning and actively dealing with them.

(As the foreign language was mainly an "oral language" for her, subject #23 found that she had difficulties in reading; "I had to read out loud in order to hear the sound of it, in order to figure out what was said.")

(e) by 're-functioning' activities, for language learning purposes, i.e., changing the original purpose of an activity in order to focus on L2.

(Subject #24 went to movies every day -- though she knew most of them -- because they were dubbed into the foreign language she was learning.)

(Subject #28 worked as a truck driver in the foreign country: "I was using the day more as a language course.")

STRATEGY 2: REALIZATION OF LANGUAGE AS A SYSTEM

GLLs develop or exploit an awareness of language as a system. In dealing with language as a system, GLLs

(a) refer back to their native language(s) judiciously (translate into L1) and make effective cross-lingual comparisons at different stages of language learning.

(Subject #24 tried to find cognates: "... instead of approaching it -- the new language -- like a blank wall... try to find everything you can that is related to what you already know, especially in lexical items.")

(b) analyze the target language and make inferences about it; they guess by utilizing clues.

(Subject #35, for example, made inferences about the surface structure of Thai by using rules and generating all mathematically possible sentences.)

(c) develop learning techniques which utilize the fact that language is a system.

(Subject #5, for example, when looking new words up in a dictionary, tried to "associate them in a field".)

STRATEGY 3: REALIZATION OF LANGUAGE AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

GLLs develop and exploit an awareness of language as a means of communication (i.e., conveying and receiving messages) and interaction (i.e., behaving in a culturally appropriate manner).

(a) In the earlier stages of language learning GLLs may emphasize fluency over accuracy. They may concentrate on speech flow rather than error-free production.

(Subject #31 did not hesitate to speak; if necessary, he simplified and attempted to circumlocute.)

(Subject #28: "...the main thing is that you overcome the inertia and use the word and not if you use it absolutely correctly.")

(b) GLLs seek out communicative situations for the purpose of communicating with members of the target language and/or in order to increase their communicative skills in the language.

(Subject #14 used French (L2) in communicative situations whenever possible: in class with discussion groups, in the foreign country with native speakers.)

(Subject #35 attempted to establish close personal contact with native speakers of the languages he was learning.)

(Subject #15 found that writing to pen-pals increased his motivation and urge to communicate.)

(c) GLLs display critical sensitivity to language use, for example, by attempting to find out sociocultural meanings (even before first contact with native speakers).

(Subject #28 memorized courtesies, conversational phrases, before he went to the foreign country.)

(Subject #4 would like to learn more about 'verbal behaviour' in different social situations.)

STRATEGY 4: MANAGEMENT OF AFFECTIVE DEMANDS

GLLs realize initially or with time that they must cope with the affective demands made upon them by language learning and succeed in doing so.

(Subject #4 overcame her inhibition to speak "just by doing it", by getting herself into situations where she had to use L2.)

(Subject #15: when learning a language, "you've got to be able to laugh at your own mistakes, you've got to have a sense of humour".)

(Subject #28: "You have to simply sit down and work out a way that you can do it and spend a lot of time at it and expect not to get very far for a while and expect to have lots of setbacks and get boring work a lot of times.")

STRATEGY 5: MONITORING OF L2 PERFORMANCE

GLLs constantly extend and revise the L2 system. They monitor the language they are acquiring by testing their inferences (guesses); by looking for needed adjustments as they come into contact with new input or by asking native informants when they think corrections are needed.

(Subject #23: "I was on the look-out for clues"; "I generated sentences... If they weren't correct people around me told me how to say it.")

(Subject #34 emphasized the importance of being constantly corrected, because "learning your mistakes in fatal".)

Language learning techniques. In addition to the general strategies, the interviews yielded a large number of more specific techniques. A list of all the techniques reported is tabulated below. Though most of the techniques had been mentioned during the informal part of the interview, in the directed part of the interview the interviewees had been asked explicitly whether they had developed any "language study habits, techniques or gimmicks" which they would find useful in acquiring the sound system, the grammar, the vocabulary, and oral/aural, reading, and writing skills in the foreign language concerned (see Part II, Question no. X).

The following list of techniques (Table 7) enumerates the different items in order of frequency. The numbers in brackets indicate the number of subjects who reported this particular technique or study habit. It became apparent that not every subject had developed special study habits in all the areas, mentioned above. The greatest number of techniques appeared in the area of vocabulary acquisition. It will further be noticed that some techniques are described in very general terms and lack explicitness.

TABLE 7

LANGUAGE LEARNING TECHNIQUES

I. Sound Acquisition

1. repeating aloud after teacher and/or native speaker (16)

2. repeating after tapes, for example in a language laboratory (8)

3. reading aloud (6)

4. using phonetic symbols, for example transcribing spoken texts phonetically (5)

5. listening carefully (4)

6. repeating silently (3)

7. talking aloud, including role-playing (3)

8. acquiring a general knowledge in phonetics, i.e., how one's mouth functions, where one has to put one's tongue, etc. in order to know what a sound feels like; or looking at people's mouths, in order "to isolate behaviourally certain sounds", and then imitating them (3)

9. doing special exercises for sounds not existent in the learner's native language (1)

10. practising different sounds, first in isolation and then in the context of words (1)

11. listening carefully to errors, for example in pronunciation and/or intonation, made by speakers of the target language when they themselves speak the learner's native language; from their errors one can infer certain key sounds or structures (1)

12. practising "mock talk", which means imitating the foreign language, for example sounds or intonation, by using words of one's own native language (1)

II. Grammar

1. following the rules as given in grammar books or text books (12)

2. trying to use grammar without thinking about rules all the time (4), for example using the grammar book only as reference when problems come up during conversations, or waiting for corrections and then integrating them.

3. inferring grammar rules from texts (3)

4. memorizing structures and using them as often as possible (2)

5. guessing, (e.g., the endings of words); having hunches and building "abstract patterns in your mind" (2)

6. comparing L1 and L2 (1)

7. learning from paradigms (1)

8. changing the word order of an English sentence into the word order of the foreign language, e.g., "horses the grass will eat" (Japanese) or writing down sentences in English and deleting one word after the other, replacing it by L2 items (1)

III. Vocabulary

1. making up vocabulary charts in L2/L1 and memorizing them (this was regarded as especially useful for beginners) (14); writing vocabulary down (3) in different situations, e.g., when watching T.V.; making index cards (1); going over vocabulary lists at regular intervals; making new lists of the words one doesn't know yet (1)

2. learning words in context (textual, situational) (8); (at an advanced level one must learn the whole concept of a word, usage, accent, etc.)

3. putting words into different structures and drilling oneself (4)

4. learning words that are associated in a field (4) (same subject area, the same lexical and semantic fields)

5. reading aloud and/or silently (4) (looking up words either after one has finished reading or when one is reading, putting a number over the word one doesn't know, making a list at the top of the page of the words unknown and then reading the paragraph again to check if one remembers the words)

6. using a dictionary when necessary (4) (underlining the words one has looked up so that one can check later if one remembers them)

7. reading a dictionary (3)

8. listening to conversations or the radio (e.g., songs -- trying to break the sound stream into words) (3)

9. (a) carrying a notebook around and writing down items, if possible in context (1)
(b) writing down words one hears in phonetic transcriptions (if one doesn't know the spelling) (1)

10. using new words in phrases or in a practical context (1)

11. games: (1)
(a) trying to think of words which have the same ending -- even with the help of a dictionary (checking later if one remembers them),
(b) giving a French (L2) word and four choices for translations (only one is correct),
(c) "French baseball" (team-pitcher asks batter a word -- if he knows the word, batter goes to first base, if he doesn't know it but the catcher does, he is out)

12. repeating words (1)

13. switching on tape-recorder with vocabulary -- when one feels relaxed (subconscious learning) (1)

IV. Listening Comprehension

1. listening to radio, records, T.V., movies, commercials (21) ("Kill two birds with one stone: listen to something you would be interested in in your native tongue")

2. listening to what people say and how they are saying it (exposing oneself to different accents, registers) (12)

3. listening to tapes (e.g., while one is driving or in a language lab) (8)

4. listening to news broadcasts first in L1, then in L2 (2)

5. teacher builds a model with cars, street, etc... each student gets a car and has to obey instructions; thus the students are practising their comprehension (1)

V. Learning to Talk

1. basic principle: "don't be afraid of making mistakes"

2. having contact with native speakers (23)
   (a) who are your friends (6)
   (b) talk to older people because they are more patient (1)
   (c) talk to anybody (e.g., teacher) (5)
   (d) talk to variety of native speakers (2); it trains your ear
   (e) participate in class (1)

3. soliloquizing aloud (7) or silently (3)

4. asking for corrections and integrating them (4)

5. learning by heart, e.g., dialogues (3)

6. subvocalizing when reading (1)

7. cf. model (5.) mentioned under 'listening comprehension' (1)-- this time the students have to give instructions and the teacher corrects their pronunciation

VI. Learning to Write

1. having pen-pals (8)

2. writing anything (exercises in class, business letters, etc.) (7) (keep business letters you receive and copy formulas of greeting, introduction, etc.)

3. spelling games (1)

4. reading a lot of whatever you want to be able to write (1) "It's got to go in before it comes out."

VII. Learning to Read

1. reading anything; magazines, newspapers, professional articles, comics (e.g., Reader's Digest because it offers a wide variety of texts in the second language) (18)
   (a) reading something that interests you (4)
   (b) reading something that is familiar (1) -- especially at the beginner's level
   (c) reading headlines, receipts, labels, menus and translating them into L2 (big letters appeal to one's eye and may facilitate reading) (1)
   (d) reading bilingual texts at the beginner's level (1)
   (e) making it one's principle to read something every day (1)

2. trying to figure out meaning from the context without consulting a dictionary (2) (don't interrupt your reading, underline the most important words and look them up later)

3. subvocalizing when reading (1)

4. reading a paragraph in L2; translating words and expressions one doesn't know into L1 (check with dictionary); studying them; reading the paragraph again; silently translating it into L1; then reading out aloud in L1 until one is sure that one knows it in L1; going back and reading it in L2 --; "It's a real drudgery, but it works."

Discussion of Research Instrument and Results

Discussion of research instrument. For the present study, the interview proved to be a useful research technique; there were, however, certain shortcomings. For the most part, the combining of the two basic types of interviews -- semi-directed and directed -- was successful. The first, semi-directed part allowed the interviewees to introspect into their past language learning experiences without feeling restricted by a series of specific questions. Thus, the interviewers were able to get information which frequently could only be tapped by allowing the interviewees to enter a 'stream of consciousness', since a great part of the learners' reported experiences had taken place a long time before the interviews.

However, due to the limited direction, some interviewees tended to digress. On the other hand, a few interviewees who did not volunteer a great deal of information had to be 'prompted' by the interviewers. In doing so, however, the interviewers had to be careful in the wording of their questions, so as not to influence the interviewees' responses.

Another problem arising from the semi-directed interviews was the difficulty in statistical evaluation. Not all interviewees provided specific information on identical topics. Therefore, the calculated percentages can only be regarded as indications of what a certain number of interviewees mentioned without having been asked directly. This difficulty generally did not present itself in the directed or structured second part of the interview, although it occasionally occurred that a question was overlooked.

Since the primary purpose of the interviews was to gather information about the interviewees' past language learning experiences, it was appropriate to have the semi-directed part of the interview precede the more directed section, in which the attempt was made to induce the interviewees to combine their past insights and present views about language learning. However, as it turned out, the main disadvantage of this sequencing was that a number of questions had already partly been answered in the first part of the interview, for example, questions about specific learning techniques developed and affective demands made upon the learners. In retrospect, it might have been better to incorporate some of the questions contained in the second part into the first part of the interview.

Another aspect to be considered was the duration of the interviews. The interviews lasted much longer than originally anticipated. In order to avoid impatience or fatigue on the part of the interviewees, it would have been advisable to limit each interview to approximately one hour. Such a restriction, however, would have meant eliminating those questions that referred strictly to the hypothetical language learning situation; and it was not desirable to lose this information.

Apart from critical remarks on the format of the interview, the study gave rise to three fundamental questions: (1) To what extent are the statements made in the interviews valid, considering that the subjects, in the first part of the interview, talked about their actual learning experiences in retrospect and, in the second

part, expressed views related to a hypothetical language learning situation? How many insights were lost due to the time gap between the language learning experiences and the interview? (2) Is language learning a conscious or mainly an unconscious process, and, if the latter, can an interview be used to uncover the unconscious aspects? (3) How useful is a list of general strategies? Are they perhaps not too obvious and self-evident?

Although we believe that these are reservations one has to bear in mind, it is felt that interviews are a valid research technique in that they provide interesting insights and ideas about language learning which observation, for example, could not yield.

Having completed the present investigation, we are aware of two other aspects which may be subject to criticism. First, the number of interviewees was relatively small and the spectrum of educational backgrounds and present occupations fairly narrow. If the sample had been larger and had included members of more distinct professional groups, such as language teachers, businessmen, interpreters and translators, a greater variety of strategies and techniques might have been identified.

Second, in view of the fact that not all the interviewees had reached an advanced level of proficiency in the language(s) learned, more rigourous selection criteria should be applied if a similar study were conducted again. Homogeneity in the achievement levels and heterogeneity in the social and educational background and professions would provide a more clearly defined sample than was the case in the present

investigation. The question arises, of course, whether self-evaluations of language competence are reliable. In cases of doubt, achievement tests might have to be administered.

The critical remarks, made above, do not invalidate the findings of this study, since all interviewees have shown a great potential in language learning, independent of the fact whether they have achieved an advanced proficiency level or just a working knowledge in the language under concern. Furthermore, it has to be kept in mind that the major purposes of the present study were, first, to test interviews as a research tool in the investigation of language learning, second, to identify strategies and techniques developed and employed by good language learners, third, to gather information about other factors operating in successful language learning.

Discussion of results. Generally speaking, the interviews demonstrated the individuality of each language learning career, but at the same time identified many experiences and characteristics common to all cases. The more general attributes shared by most interviewees are reflected in the strategies, presented in the preceding section. If one takes a global look at the interviews, it appears to be appropriate to describe the good language learner, in general terms, as someone who actively involves himself in the language learning process, either right from the beginning or at a later point in time; he also finds ways to overcome obstacles that might impede his language learning success, whether they are linguistic, affective or environmental.

The good language learner was not necessarily the one who achieved equally well in all the languages he attempted to learn. He may have selected one particular language for intensive study for a variety of reasons, ranging from professional opportunities, personal reasons, or an interest in languages per se. It could be hypothesized that the last type of language learner would succeed in a variety of different language learning situations since he does not need the presence of motivational factors other than the language itself.

With respect to the individuality of each language learning career, the complexity of interplay of different variables that led to success becomes apparent. Thus, personality characteristics, learning environments, attitudinal aspects, learning strategies and accidental circumstances appear to be influential to varying degrees and in different combinations for success in language learning.

Furthermore, it is worthy of note that language learning aptitude, early starting age, and length of exposure appear to be of less significance with respect to success in language learning than a strong motivation and positive attitude towards the learning task, favourable learning circumstances, e.g., immersion into the target language environment, certain personality characteristics, such as sociability and persistence, and the development of learning techniques suitable to the learner's personal needs.

Since one of the purposes of the present study was to examine the validity of Rubin's and Stern's lists of strategies (see p. 2f. and 5f.) it is appropriate to compare their inventories with the new list of strategies presented earlier (see p. 52f.).

It becomes apparent that the interview study generally confirmed the kinds of strategies suggested by Rubin and Stern. All of Rubin's strategies have basically been evidenced in the individual language learning experiences. Only a few modifications are necessary. For example, Strategy 1 states that "the good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser". From the interviewees' remarks it can be concluded that the learners did not always guess accurately, but that they willingly indulged into a trial-and-error game, waiting or asking for corrections (see, for example, case study 3 in Chapter III). Furthermore, Rubin writes:"The good language learner is often not inhibited" (Strategy 3). In view of the interviewees' reports this statement has to be modified, indicating that, if the learner is inhibited, he will learn to cope with his inhibition.

Stern's suggested strategies provided very useful categories for the analysis of the interviewees' reported language learning experiences. Some of Stern's strategies, however, were felt to overlap and to express different levels of generalization. Thus, for example, the learner's "willingness to practise" (Strategy 7) could be considered to be an example of Strategy 2 ("An active approach to the learning task"). Strategy 10 ("Developing the second language more and more as a separate reference system...") appears to be a result of the learner's efforts rather than a strategy in itself. Indications of conscious attempts to learn 'to think' in the foreign language, for example by soliloquizing, could be considered as practice techniques.

In the present list of strategies, the attempt was made to avoid such overlaps. Stern's strategies facilitated the development

and formulation of super-ordinate strategies, which could be regarded as general learning descriptors. It was felt to be necessary to reduce the actual number of major strategies; yet at the same time the inventory was extended in that it included several sub-strategies, which resulted from the interviewees' reports. Although the concept of strategy was defined in very general terms, it was considered to be valuable in that it led to the development of a tentative language learning model. This model will be presented in the following section.

The major addition to the existing strategies is the list of language learning techniques (see p. 57). Although some lack explicitness, it is hoped that this list may nevertheless prove useful to language teachers and learners.

A Tentative Model of the Second Language Learning Process

The identified super-ordinate strategies (see p. 51) together with the general information gathered during the interviews lend themselves to be incorporated into a model which describes essential aspects of the language learning process. The following diagram (see Figure 1) is an attempt to represent this model. It is very tentative and should be regarded as a discussion model.

Language learning takes place in a social context, which provides the learning setting and the linguistic input (either as a whole, e.g., in an immersion situation in the country of the target language, or through educational institutions, e.g., schools). The triggering factors, which start off the language learning process, can comprise a large variety of aspects, e.g., instrumental or integ-

A TENTATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING MODEL

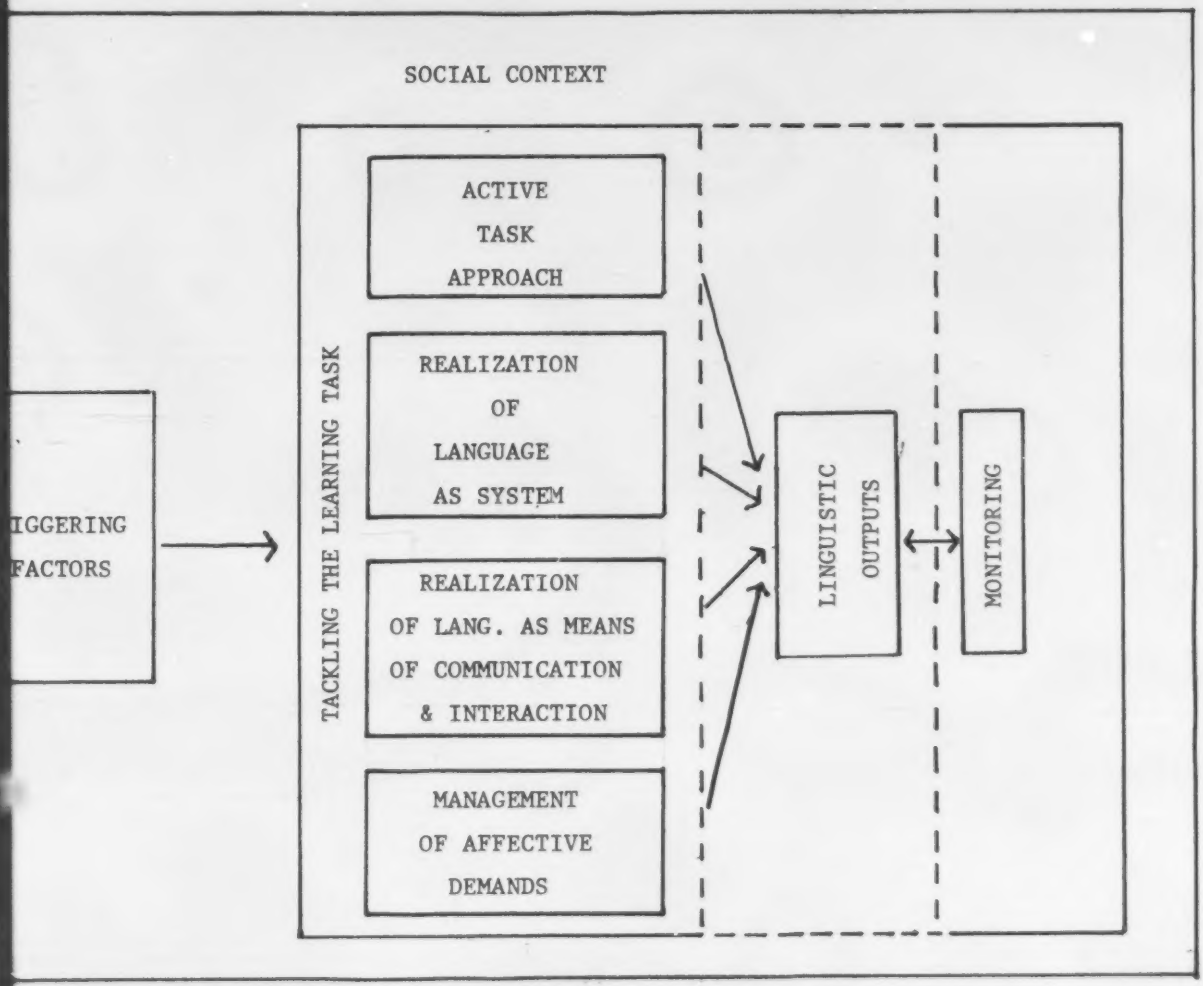

Figure 1.

rative orientation in Gardner and Lambert's sense (see Gardner and Lambert, 1972), educational policies, e.g., French as an obligatory subject in Canadian schools, a general academic orientation, personal reasons, and interest in languages per se, or accidental circumstances.

Once the language learning process has been 'triggered off', the learner begins to tackle the language learning task. The good language learner will display an active task approach (see Strategy 1, p. 52); he will either exploit the learning opportunities as they are offered to him, or he will seek learning situations appropriate to his needs. He will develop effective practice techniques; he will involve himself in the learning task as much as possible.

The good language learner will further realize language as a system (see Strategy 2, p. 53), for example, by making inferences about the target language. He will also develop an awareness of language as a means of communication and interaction (see Strategy 3, p. 54). In addition, he will learn to cope with all affective demands which language learning might make upon him (see Strategy 4, p. 55).

During this process, the good language learner will 'deliver' linguistic outputs and wait for or elicit corrective or affirmative feedback from native speakers or other authorities on the language, e.g., teachers. In other words, he will constantly monitor his performance (see Strategy 5, p. 55).

The ideal end-result of the whole process is total internalization of the target language; the more realistic result is an approxi-

mation (or progressive steps of approximations) to the target language. This aspect of language learning is not incorporated into the model.

The proposed model is both dynamic and analytic. The language learner will proceed through these various aspects, either putting equal emphasis on all of them or focusing on individual aspects at various stages of his language learning. The model may also serve as an analytical scheme to identify areas in which language learners have difficulties or areas which they fail to realize altogether.

The ten detailed case studies, presented in the following chapter, will illustrate this tentative language learning model and generally discuss its applicability. The selected case studies represent some of those interviews which, from the point of view of understanding language learning, are particularly interesting.

CHAPTER III

DETAILED CASE STUDIES OF SELECTED LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Out of the 34 interviews conducted, ten individual interviews were selected to illustrate unique learning approaches and experiences. One of these interviews, presented in this section, was held with an unsuccessful language learner (Ms. K.). It was included here as a contrast. The remaining nine case studies, which were chosen to represent different kinds of successful language learners and their strategies and techniques, are illustrative of the following situations:

1. great success in a formal language learning situation; (Ms. A.)
2. failure in a formal language learning setting, success in an informal situation; (Mr. B.)
3. limited success in a formal language learning setting, success in an informal setting, consciously developing and applying interesting techniques; (Ms. C. and Mr. D.)

4. success in learning a new language in an informal learning situation, in which language becomes the means for fulfilling other functions; (Ms. E., Mr. F., and Ms. G.)

5. successful systematic approach to foreign languages; (Mr. H. and Mr. J.)

The case studies follow the actual interview as closely as possible. Many direct quotations are included, not only to illustrate the individual's points of view and his reported experiences but also to give these language learning histories a more realistic and authentic touch than indirect statements would do.

Case Study One

This case study serves as an illustration of a language learner who was very successful in a formal learning situation.

NAME: Ms. A.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Research officer in the area of applied linguistics

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED:[1] Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Latin, French**

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[1] ** Languages are designated by two asterisks when ranked under "Advanced" with at least three skills.
* Language competence is ranked under "Working Knowledge" with at least three skills.
½ Only two skills are indicated under "Working Knowledge".
For further details, see chart on p. 18.

Ms. A. was born in Toronto and spent her childhood in the same city. Though her parents were fluent speakers of Yiddish, they communicated exclusively in English. Ms. A. remembered that she heard Yiddish being spoken on some occasions, for example, when her grandparents were visiting or when her father, a doctor, talked to some of his patients on the phone. She herself, however, never spoke it "spontaneously" as a child.

Yiddish became the first foreign language Ms. A. started to learn in Grade 2 (or 3). After her regular school-hours she attended a Jewish school for three years. She learned to write and read and also to speak Yiddish, but could not recall what degree of fluency she had attained, as she never used Yiddish as a language of communication in later years.

After three years, Ms. A. was transferred to a different Jewish school, which emphasized the learning of Hebrew. "Whatever progress I might have made in Yiddish was nullified." Ms. A. mentioned that her present competence in Yiddish was very limited. She was still able to understand "the gist" of a conversation and to read Yiddish "haltingly", but was not able to produce it.

Regarding Hebrew, Ms. A. learned to read for the most part, as the main purpose of instruction was to be able to read religious texts. Going to "Hebrew School", as the afternoon school was referred to, was not a very stimulating educational experience:

> Everybody hated it, because there wasn't anything very interesting... it was all very dry, taught by older people who had come from Europe, who had had no teacher training.

The third foreign language Ms. A. studied formally was French, which she began in high school (Grade 9). Apart from having been attracted by the sound of French, Ms. A. gave total credit to her excellent teachers for making the learning of French in a formal situation into such an enjoyable and interesting experience. The teacher Ms. A. had from Grade 11-13 brought a lot of variety into her teaching, for example, by changing her approach to certain problems, or by adding cultural material. She also reduced the use of the native language to an absolute minimum. She further challenged good students to do extra work and occasionally asked them to teach the class:

> The teacher obviously loved her subject. She brought such enthusiasm, interest, and devotion to it that -- if you were interested at all -- you couldn't help being inspired.

Since Ms. A. enjoyed French very much, she vaguely considered the possibility of studying modern languages at university. Therefore, she chose German as a second foreign language to be learned in high school in order to fulfill the credit requirements for entering university language programs. Even though she had missed the first year of German instruction in Grade 10, Ms. A. successfully attempted to catch up with the rest of the class by studying intensively during her summer holidays under the guidance of a tutor. Learning German presented as little difficulty to her as did learning French. Ms. A. mentioned, however, that she has hardly retained any German as she never used it in later years. She recalled that, when travelling through Germany several years ago, she was able to read signs, etc.,

but that she could not understand what was said to her.

Latin was the fifth language Ms. A. studied. Her study of Latin began also in high school and she took it as a course for three years. Though she was not certain if Latin had been helpful in learning French at school, she felt that it is occasionally useful at the present time in helping her to derive the meaning of an unknown French word by recognizing the Latin root.

At the end of Grade 13, Ms. A. attended a French summer school in Quebec for six weeks. However, being entirely surrounded by other English-speaking students, there was little incentive to speak French. Furthermore, none of the teachers exerted any pressure on the students to speak French. She nevertheless regarded the experience as valuable from a motivational and cultural point of view. The main 'linguistic' achievement was to increase her comprehension of French. Her ear became attuned to a different accent; her oral skill, however, did not greatly improve.

However, the acquisition of French was still to become Ms. A.'s language learning career. On entering university, Ms. A. at first enrolled in Social and Philosophical Studies as a "gateway" to various honours programs. As she failed the first year of economics, she changed to a "General Arts Program" and majored in French. Since her ability in French had already reached a fairly high level at the end of Grade 13, Ms. A. did not have any difficulty in following the lectures on literature, which were held exclusively in French.

Ms. A. was aware of the fact that at the beginning of university her comprehension of French was better than her production. Although she experienced a steady improvement in all language skills during her university years, the emphasis was always more on written French, for example, commenting on literary aspects, than on acquiring an ease in conversation.

At the end of her third year of university, Ms. A. went to Paris for two months. She stayed in a small "pension" and tried to speak as much French as possible at meal times, but found that the French guests reacted in a very cold and unfriendly manner. She took courses at the Alliance Française. As she was placed at the highest level, she did not feel very challenged:

> Conversation was the only part where I felt really challenged. It was always production that was the problem. Nothing else. Of course, I skipped a lot of classes, there were more interesting things to do and it wasn't formal, nobody was making me go -- so I didn't go -- but outside of school... I met very few Parisians, though I did try, and outside the stores and cafés I just didn't speak French.

In addition, she had an English-speaking boyfriend in Paris, a situation which again restricted her opportunities to speak French. During her stay, however, her French comprehension did increase, not only due to the French-speaking environment but also because she went to see many French films. When encountering new words, she usually did not have to consult a dictionary in order to get the meaning of the word, but made use of all environmental clues: "The context tells you what it is." Speaking from a language point of view, however, she did not regard her stay in Paris as very valuable. If

she were in a similar situation again, she said she would now know how to exploit it linguistically: "I think, now knowing what I do, I would have somehow tried to get into an immersion situation... to live with a French family, for example."

Another attempt, later on, at immersing herself into a French-speaking environment (at the Université Laval) again was of limited success and value as Ms. A. lived in a residence with many English Canadians. She neither went out of her way to avoid those native language contacts nor did she force herself into situations where she had to use French. She spoke French to a few Québecois on campus and also attended many courses, but, basically she "was there to have fun and not to learn French". The great facility in speaking French, which Ms. A. now has, was attained when she had to work "in a French-speaking world" for the first time. She was teaching French at a bilingual college. Since the other staff members spoke French exclusively, Ms. A. "just had to learn to joke around in French, to speak casually" as she would in her native language.

When asked if satisfied with her achievement in French, Ms. A. indicated that, despite having maintained a very high level of French, she would still be interested in extending her knowledge to very specialized areas, for example, botany. She would also like to include different registers. "I would like to have the same working knowledge of French as I have in English."

In reply to the question of whether she thought she had a gift for languages, Ms. A. answered that she regarded herself as

strong in languages, but not exceptionally so:

> I am a good language learner, but I am not gifted in that I don't pick up languages just like that... I think I have to work at it.

Ms. A. also indicated that she frequently felt discouraged, not only at the initial stages but also at more advanced stages, because she was not progressing as fast as expected. To overcome this feeling, she simply told herself that she had to persist.

Attempting to sum up the factors that led to her success in learning French, Ms. A. maintained that she benefitted greatly from the formal teaching situation, her excellent teachers, and their approach to teaching and learning languages:

> I don't know how well I would have succeeded with today's methods... A very rational approach to language learning suited me. I did memorize the vocabulary list and I did do my homework... I liked it, so I participated... Having exercises to do, a lot of written work, being asked a lot of questions in class, wanting to be good at it, that's what made me learn well... it was very rational. It was something I worked at... nothing but good teachers... that was terribly important, I think.

Another influential factor was her interest in language as a system:

> I liked the grammar -- all those things that nobody liked -- ... I love parsing sentences... I love worrying about the meaning of words, I am very fond of pinpointing grammatical errors....

She further emphasized that she was very achievement-oriented. Her parents had stressed the importance of an academic education from early childhood on. "I am in the good old generation where you had to do well."

Discussion of Case Study One

In the following discussion the applicability of the tentative language learning model (see p. 69) to this particular case study will be examined. Ms. A.'s learning of French will provide the main example for the various aspects of the model, since this was the only language in which she achieved native-like competence. In addition, brief reference will be made to the other language learning experiences.

Triggering factors. The main circumstantial factor which started off Ms. A.'s learning of French was an educational policy which made French into a compulsory school subject in the high school curriculum.

Active task approach. Ms. A. reported that she had excellent teachers which made learning French in the formal situation of the classroom into an enjoyable and interesting experience. Ms. A. appeared to have taken full advantage of this learning opportunity; she reported that she actively participated in class; she did all the assigned homework, memorized vocabulary lists, did a lot of written exercises and, in addition, she accepted the teacher's challenge and did extra work, which went beyond the regular requirements, in order to increase her competence in French. Similarly, she actively followed the university courses, in which the emphasis clearly was on written French.

The three learning settings which combined an informal learning environment with formal instruction were only minimally

exploited by Ms. A. for her linguistic advancement. In retrospect, Ms. A. realized that she should have attempted to modify the immediate learning circumstances in order to have benefitted more linguistically; for example, by living with a French family instead of mingling too much with speakers of her mother tongue. Nevertheless, the fact that Ms. A. sought other learning opportunities is an indication of her active involvement in the language learning task.

Ms. A. mentioned a few techniques she applied during her stay in Paris, e.g., she went to see many French films, which increased her listening comprehension; she used environmental clues, which facilitated comprehension. It appears that these techniques were used incidentally and were not consciously developed or systematically applied.

Ms. A. benefitted greatly from the last learning setting, which she selected, namely her daily informal contact with native speakers of French, who used their own language exclusively.

Realization of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction. Ms. A.'s case study does not provide a great deal of information on these two aspects of the model. Ms. A. stated, however, that she liked a "very rational approach to language learning", focusing on grammar, i.e., on language as a system. It may have been for this reason that her so-to-speak 'forceful' realization of the communicative aspect of language occurred at a relatively late stage in her language learning, when circumstances provided Ms. A. with the incentive of necessity to develop actively

her oral communicative competence.

Other aspects of the model. With respect to affective demands Ms. A. stated that she was frequently discouraged because she was not progressing as fast as possible. However, she seemed to have a very realistic insight into the time demands of language learning and simply told herself that she had to persist.

Ms. A. did not mention how she monitored her performance in the target language.

Other language learning experiences. Regarding Ms. A.'s other language learning experiences, it appears that-- with the exception of Hebrew-- Ms. A. always approached the learning task willingly and actively. Her successful attempt at covering the material of one year of German within a couple of months provides an excellent example. However, none of these languages was pursued further and the available information is extremely limited.

Other comments. Ms. A.'s case study has revealed several factors which accompanied and influenced her language learning. At the end of the interview, Ms. A. had emphasized the strong parental support she had received from early childhood on; Ms. A.'s parents had instilled into her an academic orientation. Ms. A.'s strong achievement orientation, her willingness to word hard and to persist may, therefore, partly be attributable to parental influence, but they also are an essential characteristic of Ms. A. The 'triggering factors' so-to-speak 'fall on fertile soil', the components of which

are characteristics inherent in the learner. The model does not provide for learner characteristics and is lacking in this respect.

Another important factor which accompanied Ms. A.'s language learning and influenced it positively was the experience of an excellent teacher, who managed to transfer her own enthusiasm for French to her student. Concomitant factors like the above are also not included in the model, but form an important dimension.

It is an interesting observation that Ms. A. applied her language potential only to French and not to any of the other languages. It is not positively known what kind of selection criteria were operating. It can be assumed that the 'emotional bond' to French as a language and as a subject influenced Ms. A.'s choice.

Case Study Two

This case study describes a student's failure in a formal language learning setting and his subsequent success in learning a different language in a learning situation which combined an informal with a formal learning environment.

NAME: Mr. B.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Assistant professor of history

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: Latin, French, German, Hebrew*

Mr. B. was born in Toronto and spent his childhood in the same city. At home he was exposed to Yiddish, English and Polish.

He himself spoke and was spoken to in English and Yiddish, depending on certain "social circumstances". His parents spoke Polish with each other when they did not want him to understand their conversation. Mr. B. does not remember if his first language was English or Yiddish or whether he acquired both simultaneously.

In general he now feels more competence in English, though it is still easier for him to talk in Yiddish with his mother.

The languages spoken in his environment were mostly English and some Hungarian and Yiddish. The first foreign language he learned in a formal situation was Hebrew, an experience which will be described at a later point. In the regular high school, he took French in Grade 9 and 10 without much success. "I didn't seem to be able to learn languages out of textbooks." He also took Latin in Grade 9 and 10 and got a very good mark, because the mark was not based on a language test, but on a project on the culture of ancient Rome, which he enjoyed doing very much.

As his performance in French did not improve at all, one teacher suggested that he should take German instead of French, hoping that the student's knowledge of Yiddish would facilitate his learning of German. He tried for a couple of months, but by the end of Grade 10 he had dropped out of French, German and Latin: "When it came to failures, I was a great success." Asked about the reasons for his failure he commented:

> I was a discipline problem, so it is very hard to dis-associate my learning practices from my usual behavioural difficulties in high school.

He was forbidden to take any more languages at school by the principal. Mr. B. felt very concerned about his lack of success, because it meant that he would never be able to go to university, as languages were an obligatory entrance requirement.

In order to find out what might have contributed to his failures, Mr. B. was asked to describe the learning activities in the different language classes: "I had to conjugate verbs. That's what language learning amounted to -- conjugating verbs." He was presented with a textbook, had to do some exercises and drills, and to act out short dialogues,but never really understood what was going on, and why he was doing it:

> I must confess my problem was basically that I couldn't understand... what it was all about. I never had to conjugate a verb in English and I didn't know why the hell I was conjugating a verb in French... and what rhyme or reason it had in terms of learning a language.

He also seemed to have strongly disliked his French teacher, whom he described as "a prissy matron... who had been as close to France as perhaps Etobicoke and dismissed French Canada with a 'flick of the wrist'".

Homework was assigned, but he never did it. The only subjects which appealed to him very much were social studies and history:

> I just wasn't interested in school work at all. The most difficult thing was, perhaps, languages -- I don't know why -- I don't think it's innately so, because I've learned languages since in different environments.

Before describing his successful language learning experience in detail, it has to be mentioned that Mr. B. was accepted at university and took two years of French. The way of teaching was very similar to his high school experience. The only additional activity was a periodic session in the language laboratory. The professor was very kind and sensitive to students having language learning difficulties. Again Mr. B. did not succeed. Apart from disliking the way of teaching, he reacted against the fact that he was compelled to learn French and that it was taken out of a social context:

> It didn't seem to have any intrinsic value, any real meaning... It certainly didn't seem to have any real function in terms of what I wanted to do.

Mr. B. further commented that the extremely negative high school experience probably still bore an influence on his attitude towards French and to learning languages in general. It seemed, however, impossible for him to analyze the complexity of reasons with absolute certainty:

> Maybe it was me! I really don't know. All I know is that the outcome of this was a very very negative response to a formal learning of languages.

He did, however, fulfill his Ph.D. French requirements, i.e., translation of a French text into English. Following his professor's advice, he studied French texts which had been translated into English, in order to have immediate feedback. He studied intensively for three weeks, and, by chance, the texts he was given to translate were by the same author he had studied, and so he passed.

The learning of Hebrew, the first of Mr. B.'s formal language learning attempts, had begun in Grade 6 and, again, was mainly a negative experience. For eight years he went to a Jewish afternoon school, which presented "a whole other world". Hebrew was approached as a "phonetic language. You learn to read it without ever understanding it...". If the children did not read the way they were supposed to they "got a clip on the ear". He disliked it, but he learned to read very quickly. However, he did not learn a lot of Hebrew, despite the attempt his teacher made. Again, Mr. B. exphasized that he was a great discipline problem.

For several years he had had no further contact with Hebrew until he went to Israel. He interrupted his university studies and spent a year in a Kibbutz. There he joined a language class to learn Hebrew. This time, however, the formal instruction was complemented by immediate immersion. The material used was graded in difficulty and dealt with contemporary problems; for example, they read a weekly newspaper which was published for immigrants learning Hebrew. He liked the teacher very much. She had a very good sense of humour and regarded language learning as a "pretty strange and silly thing". She succeeded in making her students feel relaxed in the language learning classroom and did not exert any pressure on the students to work by deadlines. They were also allowed to choose material to their own liking. The social relations which were developed in class were maintained outside class within the job context. Mr. B. spoke English with the few North Americans in his class but had to use Hebrew when working outside. Learning vocabulary became a

necessary and meaningful task because it was related to practical contexts.

In order to cope with the problem of learning to speak, Mr. B. made contact with the children of the Kibbutz:

> They were the most helpful in learning because, first of all, you felt no embarrassment in talking to them, and secondly, their Hebrew was quite often just as poor as yours... you make yourself understood with them and you gain a certain degree of confidence... they didn't seem to see any language handicap on my part. They were very patient... I learned an awful lot about expressions, how one moves the body when talking, etc.... because the kids really exaggerated it at first.

Within three to four months Mr. B. was able to understand a lot of Hebrew. By six months he could make himself understood without too much difficulty. At the end of one year he spoke fairly freely. The emphasis was on speaking and reading, whereas writing had been neglected. Several years later Mr. B. went back to Israel for six weeks and he was very surprised to find that he had retained a great deal of Hebrew. Within a short time he was back on the same level he had reached at the end of his immersion experience. Even now he still considered that he had a working knowledge of Hebrew. Despite having learned one language successfully, however, Mr. B. was convinced that he had no gift for languages; he felt that he had a bad memory and also disliked analyzing languages.

His positive experience with learning Hebrew, which might have been influenced by a more positive attitude towards the language itself and its speakers, did not have a positive effect on the learning of French at university. Mr. B. believed that the context

of his learning was a major factor influencing his failures and his one success.

Ending the interview, Mr. B. expressed that it would be interesting for him to find out how he would react in a French immersion situation, comparable to the Hebrew language learning experience.

Discussion of Case Study Two

As in the previous discussion of case study one, we will begin with the language which was acquired successfully. Subsequently, brief reference will be made to the other languages which Mr. B. had attempted to learn.

Triggering factors. Although not explicitly stated, the learning of Hebrew was probably triggered by parental pressure which operated in the framework of tradition, namely that a Jewish child should know Hebrew.

The second, more important, triggering factor, which made Mr. B. interrupt his university studies and go to Israel, is not known. A general interest in Israel might have provided the incentive to spend some time in the country and to learn its language.

Active task approach. When Mr. B. started to learn Hebrew as a child in a Jewish afternoon school, he responded extremely negatively to the learning situation and refused to involve himself in the learning task. When, as an adult, he wanted to learn Hebrew, he displayed an active task approach. He made use of a learning

situation which offered formal and informal learning opportunities, classroom instruction and constant contact with native speakers; in addition, the target language was the medium of communication in practical situations, i.e., working on the Kibbutz. As Mr. B. reported, vocabulary was mainly learned in conjunction with the work he did outside the classroom, which indicates a 'functional approach' to the learning of one aspect of the target language.

Another important factor, which probably provided an additional motivational force, was the teacher. Mr. B. indicated that he liked her very much and appreciated her way of teaching. She encouraged students to select learning material of their own liking.

The other aspects of the model. It can only be assumed that Mr. B. also realized language as a system, at least during the periods of formal instruction. Since Hebrew was the only language of communication in working situations, Mr. B. had to realize language as a means of communication and interaction. However, there is additional evidence in Mr. B.'s history for this foregoing aspect of the model.

Mr. B.'s way of coping with the problem of learning how to speak, namely by associating with children, is an illustration of several of the model's aspects. First, by wanting to communicate, Mr. B. realized language as a means of communication and interaction. Second, seeking contact with children (instead of adults) was Mr. B.'s way of coping with the affective demands with which the learning task confronted him -- i.e., feelings of embarrassment and inhibition.

Third, although not explicitly stated, he probably used the children for corrective feedback, i.e., his young interlocutors became the means for his monitoring strategy.

Other comments. Brief reference will now be made to Mr. B.'s other language learning attempts.

Since French is an obligatory subject in the curriculum of schools in Ontario, Mr. B. had to take French for a certain number of years. As to Latin, no information is available on what triggered his interest in this classical language. His professed interest in history might have stimulated him to enroll in a Latin course.

The third language Mr. B. had attempted to learn was German. He had followed the advice of his teacher who had hoped that Mr. B.'s knowledge of Yiddish would facilitate his learning of German. It is interesting to note that Mr. B.'s bilingual upbringing (English and Yiddish) did not prove to be helpful to his subsequent second language learning.

As Mr. B. reported, he had not been interested at all in school in his childhood and adolescence. His general rebellion against school, his strong dislike of some teachers may have been partly responsible for his absolute failure in all language learning attempts of that time. Furthermore, his inability to operate in situations in which languages were treated purely as subjects was probably due to the fact that he was (unconsciously) convinced that languages were means of communication and not school subjects to be studied. When the learning situation provided the opportunity

for meaningful communication, he was an eager learner and progressed well.

With respect to the proposed model, Mr. B.'s way of tackling the learning task could be described as scoring minus on all aspects; he -- so-to-speak -- 'dropped out' of the language learning process after the triggering factors had operated.

Case Studies Three and Four

The following two case studies illustrate the development and application of learning techniques, appropriate to the subjects' needs, in an immersion situation, which led to the successful acquisition of the foreign language under concern. The initial language learning experiences in a formal setting had been of limited success.

Case Study Three

NAME: Ms. C.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: M.A. student in applied linguistics

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: Latin, German, Polish, French**, Swedish½

Ms. C. was born in Virginia (USA) and spent most of her life in different cities and countries: Windsor (Ontario), Detroit, Burma, France, Edmonton, Montreal, Poland, Sweden, Germany and now Toronto.

She comes from a unilingual English-speaking family background; as a child she was occasionally exposed to German, as she played with German-speaking children in Detroit and went to German movies with them. When living in Burma for 2 years (at the age of 13),

she heard Burmese being spoken in her neighbourhood, but did not acquire any Burmese.

The first foreign language she took at school was Latin, for two years. During her first year at university she took German, in her second year she studied French.

German was taught in a very traditional way; they did translations and drills, read a little, memorized dialogues and learned some grammar. After one year of German, she was able to speak the language a little bit.

The French teacher used an audio-lingual approach. Despite the emphasis on oral production, Ms. C.'s oral skills remained extremely limited. She now believes that one of the reasons for her poor performance was a personality clash between her and her teacher. In addition, she also had a very negative attitude towards the French sounds and grammar. She was put off by French grammar -- it struck her "as odd", the nasals "sounded sort of ridiculous". She also did not make any cross-lingual comparisons which she found very useful for understanding and retaining German vocabulary. In general, she found German much easier than French -- "it was so much like English" (perhaps this was also attributable to her contacts with German children).

At the age of 21 she went to France with the expectation and intention of never returning to North America, as she hated life there. She later realized that she could neither identify with France nor with North America. Her first days/weeks in France were very difficult.

Ms. C. reported: "When I got to France, I couldn't say a thing in French, but there was no linguistic shock, there was a cultural shock." She felt threatened by the throngs of people, "always talking, always moving around".

> I was afraid of these people; when you're sitting in a café in North America, somebody isn't sitting almost on top of you; but as to the French language itself -- when I got into the French environment, I really liked it. I found it was beautiful. I liked the mentality of the people.

In order to improve her practically zero-competence in French, Ms. C. went to see one or two French movies every day. Most of the movies were American ones, dubbed into French, and she had already seen quite a few of them. "I was relating what I heard to what was going on." After three months she was able to follow and understand French movies without too many problems.

The second day in Paris, Ms. C. met her future husband, a linguist, who was bilingual in French and German. At first, German was their only language of communication. However, she wanted to improve her French quickly. "So I decided to do the same things with French that I had intuitively done with German: finding cognates-- lexical items which are the same in both languages " and to a certain extent, also comparing the grammar, for example, word order:

> ...so instead of approaching /the language/ like a blank wall... try to find everything that you can that is related to what you already know, especially in lexical items.

She also started reading in French. This reading, for the

most part, consisted of newspapers, or magazines and American comic books. She consulted a dictionary, whenever necessary. All these activities increased her comprehension fairly rapidly. However, she still had difficulties in actually using the language. "I was a little timid about speaking... I didn't find French people very tolerant", especially not towards North Americans. Another reason why her oral skills did not improve at the same rate as her comprehension was that she and her husband began to communicate in English. English was his fourth or fifth language. "He was used to learning languages."

Ms. C.'s husband was learning English much faster than she was learning French. As a linguist he suggested a few ways of tackling the language learning task. He suggested, for example, that she should use the Latin she had learned and English, her native language, and "francicize" words. For example, knowing that the English sound /ei/ used in 'table' usually becomes /a/ in French, she would apply this rule in all cases. The English word 'cave' /keiv/ thus became /ka:v/. However, she was not aware of the possibility of a semantic change; for example, 'la cave' means 'cellar' in French, not 'cave'. Therefore, this method very often resulted in confusion on her part and in laughter on the part of the French:

> ... and I got myself into very funny problems in understanding, because I would have the meaning in English but I would 'francicize' the word; I was feeling sorry for those poor devils who had to get out of their houses and live in caves during the war.

People laughed at her, and she "began to find it funny, too". But as much as she used this method of applying French pronunciation rules to English words these experiences made her "decide to be active and find out what it really means in French and gradually to do away with English altogether".

She began to study history at the Sorbonne and interacted a lot with French students. At the end of her first year in France her comprehension still far outweighed her fluency in spoken language. It was not until the second year that she began to gain fluency. She learned very much but also acquired a lot of student jargon, occasionally misapplying it, for example, she used "Je m'en fous" (i.e., I don't give a damn), when speaking to a professor.

Ms. C. constantly and consciously monitored her French:

> I would listen in on people's conversations... I would repeat to myself, that's when I started really talking to myself... I would start repeating things I had noticed that I was doing wrong, e.g., pronouns, articles, etc.

She always tried out whatever she heard in order to get some feedback and to correct herself. She was also very interested in perfecting her pronunciation of French. She tried looking at people's mouths,

> I wanted to sound <u>so</u> French that someone would say, 'Well, are you French? -- no, there is something funny about the way you speak --/hesitation/ -- but are you French?' I wanted to speak like a native-speaker.

After three years in France, Ms. C. and her husband returned to North America; but they went back to Europe every summer, mostly to France and sometimes to Sweden and Germany.

When living in Quebec, they started speaking French at home. Her main language of communication outside her home was French as well, as she refused to speak English:

> I finally came to a phase where I felt fluent enough not to worry about French anymore though I still made mistakes. And I had to circumscribe occasionally.

After a couple of years, Ms. C. left North America and went to Poland for one year. She had no intention of staying in Poland, and, therefore did not want to learn Polish. She was, however, able to follow simple conversations.

The tentative strategies and techniques Ms. C. had adopted in France were reinforced and consciously reapplied when she learned Swedish. She spent a total of three years in Sweden, though not consecutively. Again she went to Swedish movies, listened intensely, made a lot of cross-lingual comparisons -- a technique that was particularly useful, as Swedish is very similar to English and German. She also taught English to Swedish students, using them at the same time as teachers of Swedish for herself by listening carefully whenever they spoke Swedish.

Though comprehension still was her primary objective in learning Swedish at the initial stages, a more active approach towards learning to speak was adopted. Any feeling of timidity and inhibition had disappeared and had been replaced by confidence. "I had learned how to learn languages."

The following quotations and indirect statement are an indication of the strategies and techniques used by Ms. C.:

> ... I would soak myself in the environment and try to understand all that is going on... first listen, comprehension, comprehension!

She had also developed a trial and error technique:

> ... whatever you pick up, whether it's one word or two words... use it... even if it is wrong, try it out, it doesn't matter.

She would further pretend not to understand English in order to increase her opportunity to use the language. As mentioned before, she would make cross-lingual comparisons wherever it was possible and appropriate. In addition, she would set aside days on which she would try to think only in the foreign language.

According to Ms. C., she has maintained French and Swedish up to the present, French on an advanced level and Swedish on an intermediate level and German on an elementary level.

Regarding her language learning aptitude, Ms. C. felt that she had a good ear for languages,which, in her view, might be due to her musical training. She also had a very good memory for sounds though not for words, unless she could relate them to a meaningful context. She did not like taking language apart grammatically; however, she had her "hunches" about regularities and irregularities and always tried them out.

Commenting on the reasons for her success in learning languages, she felt that it was mainly due to the immersion situation and to her strong motivation to learn the languages, especially French. Regarding certain personality characteristics which might facilitate or hinder acquiring a language, Ms. C. commented that learning to speak would be much more difficult for an introverted person than for an extroverted person: "One good characteristic is to be outgoing, to be willing to take risks." In order to make it easier for the learner she recommended: "One of the best ways to learn to talk in a

foreign language is to have a friend."

Discussion of Case Study Three

The different aspects of the tentative language learning model will mainly be discussed with reference to those two languages in which at least a working knowledge had been achieved (French and Swedish). Where appropriate, comments referring to the other language learning experiences will be included.

Triggering factors. Ms. C.'s case study offers very little information on the circumstances which triggered her learning of Latin in high school, and of French and German at university.

More background details are available regarding the second, more important, phase in Ms. C.'s learning of French. The desire to abandon a North American way of life acted as a belated second triggering factor for her increased interest in learning French. However, it is not known why Ms. C. chose France and not any other European country. An additional motivational stimulus for learning French probably was Ms. C.'s encounter with her future husband, a bilingual in German and French, on the second day of her stay in Paris.

As regards Swedish and Polish, informal learning settings, i.e., spending a considerable length of time in the respective countries, provided the learning opportunities. How Ms. C. responded to these learning environments will be indicated in the following section.

Active task approach. During her formal learning experiences in high school and at university, Ms. C. displayed only a minimal involvement in the learning task. According to her statements, her

efforts in learning French were particularly dampened by a personality clash between her and her teacher. In addition, she had a negative reaction towards the sounds and grammar of French.

This attitude towards the French language immediately changed when Ms. C. found herself in the target language environment. She systematically began to increase her knowledge of French. Ms. C. reported that she went to see one or two French movies (which frequently were American movies dubbed into French) every day. This activity is an example of what we have proposed to call the strategy of 're-functioning' activities (see p. 53).

In addition, Ms. C. started to read in French, consulting a dictionary when necessary. She also practised certain aspects of French which caused her difficulty, especially pronunciation, by watching people's mouths and by repeating to herself; she further developed the habit of talking to herself, presumably in order to practise oral fluency. Ms. C. particuarly emphasized the importance of listening to native speakers, a technique which served not only the purpose of increasing Ms. C.'s listening skills, but also acted as a monitoring device.

Ms. C. showed the same intense involvement, applying the same techniques, when learning Swedish. She indicated that she set aside certain days for 'thinking' only in Swedish, a practice technique for learning to express herself (mentally) in Swedish.

As to Polish, her efforts were minimal, the purported reason being that she had no intention of staying in Poland. However,

there is no indication that she had wanted to stay in Sweden either. The question of why Ms. C. applied her efforts to Swedish and not to Polish unfortunately cannot be answered.

Realization of language as a system. When studying German at university, Ms. C. started making cross-lingual comparisons, which she found very useful for understanding and retaining German vocabulary -- a general strategy which she developed further and applied systematically when learning French. On the advice of her husband, a linguist, she began to develop techniques in specific areas, such as pronunciation (see p. 95), in an attempt to generate French words.

Similarly, Ms. C. made cross-lingual comparisons between German and Swedish. Generally speaking, as Ms. C. indicated, she had "hunches" about regularities and irregularities of the languages she was learning, which is an indication that she utilized the possibilities which the 'systematic' aspect of languages offers for language learning.

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. During Ms. C.'s formal learning, this aspect of language learning was only minimally realized. However, in the informal learning environments of France and later Quebec, as well as in Sweden, the target languages became the languages of communication. At a time when the opportunity to speak French at home was limited, because Ms. C.'s husband wanted to speak English, she found other means of communicating in French, for example, by mixing with French students.

Similarly, in Sweden Ms. C. occasionally pretended not to know any English in order to increase the opportunity to communicate in Swedish.

Management of affective demands. Ms. C. mentioned that she felt a little bit "timid about speaking" French, because French people -- in her opinion -- were not very tolerant. However, it appears that Ms. C. overcame this shyness very well. Her final remarks on certain personality characteristics which might facilitate or impede acquiring a language allow the conclusion that she herself was "outgoing" and "willing to take risks". As regards French, she certainly followed her own advice, namely that having a friend is one of the best ways of learning to talk in a foreign language.

Monitoring. Ms. C. made several explicit statements about her monitoring strategy. She reported that she would always try out any new words or hunches about the language in order to verify or correct them. Listening to native speakers' conversations drew her attention to specific areas in which she was making mistakes, e.g., pronouns and articles in French. In Sweden, listening to her Swedish students again appeared to have been her main monitoring technique.

Other comments. It is worthy to note that Ms. C.'s language learning experiences resulted in a definite personal approach to language learning, which would probably be applied to all future language learning situations. Ms. C. stated that she had "learned how to learn languages". The two most important characteristics of her approach are listening and trying out (see p.97f.). A concomitant,

equally important result of her language learning experiences was the disappearance of any feelings of inhibition and timidity. In future language learning situations she would not encounter these impeding feelings.

It is furthermore of interest that-- in Ms. C.'s opinion -- certain aspects of language learning aptitude (good ear, good memory for sounds) played a less important role than her general strong motivation to learn the different languages, especially French.

Case Study Four

NAME: Mr. D.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Ph.D. student in linguistics

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: Spanish**, German**, Arabic, Micmac

Mr. D. was born in Ohio and spent the first twenty years of his life mostly in Ohio and Cleveland. English was the only language spoken in his family. It was also the predominant language of his neighbourhood, although Mr. D. was aware of other languages being spoken, e.g., Slovenian and German. He was convinced, however, that he was not 'linguistically affected' by these other languages.

Mr. D.'s first attempt at learning another language took place in high school. He attended a Spanish course in Grade 9 and 10. As he recalled, he had a textbook, learned to read, studied grammar, and memorized vocabulary. The teacher did not use any visual aids and there was no language laboratory available. Questioned about oral

activities, he explained:

> My teacher wasn't very good at Spanish... There wasn't really too much spontaneous speech in class. There would be things we had to memorize or simple questions about a story we had to answer... It was not like learning another language and I didn't do particularly well... I got absolutely nothing out of it.

He also reported that he hated Spanish and English; as a matter of fact, he hated school life altogether. He could not relate to school since it appeared to be totally irrelevant to him.

After high school, Mr. D. went to Kent State University. Despite the unfavourable school experience, he suddenly became interested in languages, especially in the "language aspect of Spanish and German". Mr. D. was unable to account for this sudden change in attitude towards language learning. He mentioned that he stumbled across German quite by accident. On entry into university, he had decided to study mathematics and German happened to be a prerequisite.

The teacher was not a native speaker of German, though very competent in the language. The teaching approach was similar to the way Spanish had been taught in high school. The only difference was that the university offered the facilities of a language laboratory, which Mr. D. used occasionally. Mr. D. dropped mathematics after one year but continued with German. German appealed to him greatly: "I really got turned on to German and that helped me to get more interested in Spanish... I got interested in languages for the first time." Mr. D. found it extremely difficult to clearly explain why German appealed to him. He indicated that he felt a certain degree

of achievement, because he did very well. He further mentioned that:

> ... the sound was attractive; I was able to see the relationships between... German and English, the obvious cognates, the... syntactic similarities, etc.

In the middle of his university studies, Mr. D. consciously decided to leave university and to go to Germany. "I felt that if I wanted to do it seriously, I wasn't going to be able to do it by staying at university, that I would just have to learn to speak German fluently." Unfortunately, the university course had not provided much opportunity for increasing one's oral skills.

Before his departure for Germany, Mr. D. carefully studied and memorized conversational phrases, courtesies, etc., and, once he had arrived in Germany, he immediately tried them out in real contact situations: "The first time I made a contact I spieled off three sentences I had memorized", with the result that the German began a conversation which was far above Mr. D.'s level of comprehension.

The first German city Mr. D. stayed at was Cologne. Since Cologne is a university town, he met many students and generally got along well with them. He had the impression, however, that German students were slightly arrogant and that they were treating him in a patronizing and condescending manner. But he tried to reassure himself and decided not to be bothered by their attitude, "I wasn't going to be put down by it". He also felt that the time in Cologne was "kind of tough psychologically". Since he knew that most of the students spoke English and that it would be easier for all parties to converse in English, he felt he was imposing upon

them, "forcing them to listen" to him. Generally speaking, however, he enjoyed his time in Cologne thoroughly.

For language learning purposes, Mr. D. nevertheless decided to leave Cologne. Through a newly acquired friend he made the acquaintance of a family in Lage, a small German town in North-Rhine-Westphalia. They ran a family business and offered him a job as a "Jack-of-all-trades". Mr. D. lived with this family for eight months. They understood precisely why he was in Germany. According to Mr. D. the members of the family themselves were quite aware of their own language; they had a feeling of pride about speaking good German: even among themselves they spoke very articulately and carefully.

Mr. D. found that they were always willing to help him. At the beginning, they made a particular effort to speak very clearly and slowly for him. Mr. D. reported that they made it very easy for him to get along and to progress fast. After one month he had the impression that he was "really independent in terms of speaking German". In contrast to Cologne, he felt totally at ease in this small community:

> I felt totally liberated that I could say whatever I wanted and everybody would be trying to understand it, and that makes the situation totally different.

Since he was working for this family, Mr. D. was exposed to a variety of "linguistic situations". For example, during the day he frequently drove a truck together with another young man. They became very good friends, which had a very positive effect on his language learning progress. "You just learn chit-chat very quickly. I always had my dictionary with me and my little note-book."

Writing everything down he "wondered about" became a real learning habit. Mr. D. reported:

> I kept track of what I had learned that day... I made a very concerted effort to do it... I monitored it /my performance/ every day... I was using the day more as a language course.

In the evening, he would go over his entries, check words and expressions in the dictionary and unknown structures in a grammar book.

Back at Kent State University, Mr. D. continued his formal study of German, which, of course, was now very easy for him. He recalled with amusement: "I was a wiz-kid then. I could talk circles around everybody." After approximately two and a half years of studying German and Spanish, he graduated from university.

After graduation, Mr. D. went to Alberta and studied Germanic historical linguistics, which developed his interest in general linguistics. During his years at the University of Alberta, he took one year of Arabic because he was interested in studying the script and the grammatical structures of Arabic. When asked how he approached this new language learning task, he explained that his basic principle in tackling a new language was to organize the material and memorize it: "I really believe that memorization in learning a language is essential."

Mr. D.'s most recent language learning experience took him to Sydney, Nova Scotia. For his Ph.D. thesis he wanted to investigate the derivational structures of the Micmac verb. In order to be able to carry out his research, he had to learn Micmac. Mr. D. spent eight months on a reserve. Starting to learn a new language at the

age of 31, in his opinion, was very "tough". However, he was strongly motivated and thus overcame all difficulties.

Although he was not primarily interested in learning to speak Micmac, he nevertheless had to do so. Micmac is not a written language; he therefore had to rely to a certain extent on his memory. According to Mr. D., the best way of remembering a language "is to learn to speak it".

The Micmac Indians, some of whom spoke English, considered him rather "weird", wondering why anyone would want to learn their language, but gradually they learned to accept him. Describing how he learned Micmac, Mr. D. explained that it was mainly "by osmosis, by listening -- at least at the beginning -- because they /the Indians/ used Micmac among themselves, and by asking questions". When listening, he would "hook on to familiar words" and afterwards ask them about certain aspects. In addition, he had several sessions with Indian informants. After one month, he had acquired a vocabulary of approximately 300 words.

After the Indians had overcome their initial suspicion of a white man, they became very co-operative and were extremely eager to teach him new expressions and to offer explanations. They were excited that their language was going to be written down and analyzed grammatically. Mr. D. used phonemic transcription for writing Micmac. After eight months on the reserve, he understood the structure of Micmac fairly well and he was also able to participate in simple conversations.

Commenting on his experience in learning Micmac, Mr. D. expressed the feeling that it was much harder to learn Micmac than it had been to learn German. First, he had absolutely no previous knowledge of Micmac before visiting the reserve; second, references to his native language were impossible; third, the "Weltanschauung" of the Micmac Indians was completely different from the Western view of the world: "You hesitate one extra moment before you try saying something in Micmac because it can come out so 'woperjab' that it wouldn't make any sense at all."

Mr. D.'s relation with the Indians was so relaxed that he did not have to be afraid of offending them socially through blunders on his part. Generally speaking, however, he always displayed great 'interactional sensitivity'. He commented:

> I am not a very forceful person, I am very careful not to force myself on other people; I sort of wait around to see who is willing; ... I don't impose myself too much.

Mr. D. indicated, when asked, that he would like to increase his knowledge of the languages he had learned. With respect to the general question of whether he regarded himself as "gifted" or not, he stated that he did not feel he was "particularly gifted", but very motivated and "willing to work very hard". He further mentioned that he did not think that he had a good ear for languages. He was convinced that auditory discrimination could be developed. In his opinion, this faculty was less important than motivation. He also reported that he did not have a particularly good memory. With respect to the last characteristic of aptitude, he replied that, as

a linguist, he naturally liked analyzing languages.

Reflecting on his language learning experience as a whole, Mr. D. once more emphasized the importance of motivation:

> I think that anybody who is motivated can learn any language. To me, learning a language is not different from learning any other thing. You have to simply sit down and work out a way that you can do it and spend a lot of time at it and expect not to get very far for a while and expect to have lots of setbacks and boring work to do a lot of times; but it just depends how badly you want it... If you want it, then you can get it.

With respect to his achievement in German, Mr. D. expressed the view that immersion into the target language contributed a great deal to his success:

> That really made a difference, being in a situation where you could speak German and feel free to express yourself without inhibition about imposing yourself upon other people.

In this context, Mr. D. once more mentioned that he considered this 'social' or 'interactional sensitivity', which he had experienced in Cologne and also in Sydney, to be his greatest problem. He felt it was an imposition upon people who spoke English to force them "to struggle along" with his "idiotic attempts to say 'Where's the bathroom?'". He emphasized, however, that he himself would not feel imposed upon if a language learner 'used' him in this way.

Asked about personality characteristics which might promote success, Mr. D. mentioned conscientiousness as a general prerequisite for success. He also indicated that he himself was "eager to get positive reinforcement" and would therefore make an extra effort.

Due to his different language learning experiences Mr. D. has developed a personal approach to learning a language. He indicated that he felt there was no language which he could not learn. He elaborated that he would begin by going through "the elementary grammatical structures" and then start "memorizing vocabulary and building sentences". As to the sounds, he recommended to get help from a native speaker, if possible. These initial steps would then result in "a matrix in the head and you start filling it in".

When asked how he memorized words, Mr. D. replied that he usually learned them as isolated linguistic items together with their English meaning. He was aware of the fact that context was more important "in the long run", but, based upon his experience in Germany, he set his priorities slightly differently:

> If you know a particular word and you want to use it, even if you use it wrongly--let's say you used it in the wrong cultural sense or you didn't have the grammatical sophistication--that to me is not so important when you're learning a language, because the main thing is that you overcome the inertia, and use the word, and not whether you use it absolutely correctly... To me that's the toughest part.

Mr. D. concluded the interview by mentioning one important point he always attempted to teach his own language students. He would tell them at the beginning of a course that the language material has to be regarded as "facts" and that one sentence offers more than just one item of information. He would emphasize that "the language learning process is a fact-gathering process" and that there was no need to be afraid of the task of learning a language.

Discussion of Case Study Four

The following discussion of the applicability of the model to Mr. D.'s case study will refer mainly to his learning experiences of German and Spanish, two languages in which he attained an advanced (native-like) knowledge. Comments on his other language learning experiences will be added.

Triggering factors. Although not explicitly stated, it can be assumed that Mr. D.'s decision to enroll in a Spanish course was externally controlled, since school in general was fairly meaningless to him.

Learning German was triggered by accidental circumstances--German happened to be a prerequisite for studying mathematics. It is extremely interesting to note that Mr. D.'s learning of German in itself became a catalyst for learning Spanish.

Active task approach. As indicated above, Mr. D. responded very negatively to the learning environment of high school. This negative reaction was also transferred to learning Spanish with the result that Mr. D. did not involve himself in the learning task at all or only minimally.

At university, however, his attitude towards language learning changed radically. Success in learning German was one of the reinforcing concomitant factors. Very little information is available about the way in which Mr. D. actually approached the learning task. Generally speaking, he appeared to have used the learning opportunity which the university course offered to his advantage.

It is worthwhile pointing out that Mr. D. himself felt responsible for his linguistic progress. This is evidenced, for example, by his conscious decision to change the physical learning environment, i.e., to immerse himself in the L2 environment. In Germany, Mr. D. displayed the same active control of his learning opportunities and sought out a learning situation which, in his opinion, was going to be most profitable -- linguistically speaking.

Similarly to Ms. C., Mr. D. also 're-functioned' activities; he became a truck-driver and "used the day... as a language class". He developed the habit of carrying his dictionary and note-book around and wrote everything down he heard or "wondered about". Furthermore, he diligently studied his entries in the evening. Another practice technique Mr. D. strongly believed in was memorization.

Realization of language as a system. It is interesting to note that Mr. D.'s sudden interest in languages (at university) appears to have partly been the result of his realizing that language is a system; he reported that "he was able to see the relationship between ... German and English, the obvious cognates, the... syntactic similarities" (p.105) and, for the first time in his life, he became interested in languages.

As mentioned earlier, it seems that this awareness acted as a triggering factor for awakening his interest in Spanish as well as a general motivational stimulus to pursue language learning. Thus realization of language as a system can become one of the so-called 'concomitant' factors, which accompany the subject's language

learning and influence it, for example, they may positively affect the learner's degree of persistence.

With respect to Mr. D.'s learning of German and Spanish, no further details were given in the interview of the kind of strategies and techniques he used to realize language as a system.

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. Mr. D.'s decision to go to Germany is an indication of his awareness of language as a means of communication and interaction. Furthermore, Mr. D. displayed a great deal of 'interactional sensitivity', even before he left for Germany. He studied conversational phrases and courtesies in order to be able to interact appropriately. While in Germany, he socialized with a lot of students and, later, made many friends among the inhabitants of Lage.

In general, Mr. D. emphasized the importance of using the target language as much as possible, even if the utterances are grammatically imperfect.

Management of affective demands. Mr. D.'s 'interactional sensitivity', which we have called his fear of imposing himself upon native speakers by incorrect or stumbling attempts at communicating, at times became an impeding element in his language learning. This sensitivity reveals an underlying personality trait; Mr. D. described himself as a "not very forceful person". The demands of the learning task to a certain extent conflicted with this basically positive characteristic. It is important to realize, however, that Mr. D. did

not use this trait as an excuse for withdrawing from the learning task, but found learning circumstances which suited his personality and made him feel less inhibited to communicate with native speakers.

Mr. D. also overcame other emotionally taxing situations, e.g., when he felt that he was treated in a very condescending manner by German students, he decided not to allow himself to be affected by this treatment.

Monitoring. Mr. D. appeared to have used different monitoring techniques, i.e., checking his performance against native speakers, and, in addition, using dictionaries and grammar books.

Other language learning experiences. Mr. D.'s learning of Arabic and Micmac was triggered by his interest in general linguistics; as to Micmac, necessary research for his Ph.D. thesis was an additional triggering factor. Mr. D. had definite goals and these determined the type of his approach and the degree of his involvement. He focused on language as a system, although, in order to study the verb system of Micmac, he also had to learn how to speak the language.

In learning Micmac, Mr. D. again displayed this interactional sensitivity, which proved to be very advantageous since the Indians were initially very suspicious of this white man.

Other comments. As in many of the previous case studies, this interviewee also denied having a "gift" for language learning. He indicated that he neither had a good memory nor a particularly good ear; he did, however, enjoy analyzing languages.

According to Mr. D., the crucial factors in language learning

are a strong motivation, willingness to work hard, willingness to make mistakes, and conscientiousness, all of which he possessed. Some of these characteristics, such as conscientiousness and willingness to work hard, may have been present in the learner even before his language learning began. Others, for example, a strong motivation, may have developed as a result of language learning or of external influences. Given these conditions, all 'handicaps' can be overcome, including a late starting age, which Mr. D. regarded to be disadvantageous.

Mr. D.'s description of how he would initially approach any new language task (see p. 110) is extremely interesting in that it resembles what has become known as the "threshold level"[1]. Mr. D., too, refers to "elementary grammatical structures", the basis for "a matrix in the head" which can be filled in later. He also mentions vocabulary and pronunciation, two aspects of language which the very specific definition of "threshold level" itself does not include; however, they would also be part of the first stage of the credit/unit system. The essential common feature of Mr. D.'s remarks and the attempts of the Council of Europe is that a stage <u>within</u> the language learning process is described and not a level of ultimate language command.

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[1] The Council of Europe is presently involved in introducing a unit/credit system for European adult language learners. The first stage of this system would have to provide a grammatical minimum for the situational units to be taught. "This minimum has come to be called the threshold level." (Wilkins, 1972:2).

Generally speaking, it would probably be very useful to ask language learners who have successfully acquired one or more languages how they would characterize the "threshold level" in the respective languages learned.

Case Studies Five, Six and Seven

The following three case studies illustrate the successful acquisition of a new foreign language with which the subjects had not had earlier contact. The learning took place in informal situations in which language became the means for fulfilling other functions. Formal and informal learning settings were, at least at times, combined. Previous language learning attempts of other languages had been of limited success in terms of achievement levels reached.

Case Study Five

NAME: Ms. E.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Ph.D. student of Special Education

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: Hebrew, French, Latin, German, Italian[½]

Ms. E. was born in Nova Scotia and brought up in a bilingual family. The languages spoken in her home were English and Yiddish.

Ms. E. had no recollection of her early childhood competence in Yiddish. She was told that she spoke it fluently until the age of seven. Yiddish was the only language in which she could communicate with her grandparents, who, at that time, lived in her parents' home. Ms. E. reported that at present she could still understand Yiddish, though only to a very limited extent. She mentioned, however, that

she could use the language actively and generate words and sentences. Despite her bilingual family background she regarded English alone as her native language.

Ms. E. did not come into any contact with other languages until she was sent to Hebrew school at the age of about ten or eleven for a period of five to six years. The focus of instruction was on teaching the students how to read the Hebrew script without attention to meaning. As she did not understand the content of what she had to read, Ms. E. regarded this exercise as completely useless.

The second foreign language Ms. E. attempted to learn was French, which she started in Grade 7 of the regular high school. She recalled that the students followed a text-book, learned grammar, did some reading and memorized a few dialogues. In general, oral production was extremely rare, despite the teacher being a native speaker of French.

Ms. E. continued studying French until the second year of university. The teaching of French at university did not differ greatly from the way French was taught in high school. The focus was on language as a system, and not on language perceived as a means of oral communication. Summing up her achievement in French, Ms. E. reported: "I discovered later that I could read scientific articles quite well, but I have never been able to speak French."

During her high school and university years, Ms. E. went through two other similar language learning experiences. She learned Latin from Grade 9-11 and took German at university for three years. She felt that her achievement in both languages was again very limited,

as the emphasis was on grammar and not on communication.

Her experience with language learning, which had previously meant occupying herself with a lifeless academic discipline, was completely revolutionized when she decided to go to Italy for a year and train as a Montessori teacher. From a professional point of view, she could also have been trained in Britain. However, she still regarded learning another language as "a valuable experience", and, therefore, chose to take a training course in a small town in the north of Italy and decided to try to learn the language at the same time. The language of the course was to be both Italian and English.

Ms. E.'s 'linguistic' adventure proved to be extremely successful. Starting from zero competence, she developed more than adequate comprehension and oral production within one year.

Summarizing the outcome of her learning efforts in a self-imposed immersion situation, she explained:

> The travelling I did... was... to go to Italy knowing absolutely none of the language and coming back a year later able to carry on a conversation with five to six different people simultaneously, not completely idiomatically, but at least, knowing enough about generating words to get myself around a difficult situation.

When asked to elaborate upon the way she approached the new language learning task, Ms. E. revealed many strategies and techniques and showed a great deal of insight into the affective demands made upon her in this unfamiliar situation. In her recollection the first ten days of her stay were rather a traumatic experience. She lived with an Italian family. The other English-speaking students had not yet arrived. "I felt completely cut off...

I had nobody to talk to. It was an incredible experience." She tried to make herself understood, by looking up every word in a dictionary, which she regarded as an "extremely exasperating" way of communicating. Once the other students had arrived, the feeling of being completely isolated decreased.

By following the daily lectures,Ms. E. wa amazed to find how much she "picked up" in terms of words, word arrangements and intonation, during the first couple of weeks. As the lecture itself was accompanied by practical demonstrations, she was able to relate language to meaning. "Since you could see what was happening -- along with the language -- it made a lot of sense." In addition, Ms. E. made lists of useful words by looking them up in the dictionary.

Ms. E. also attributed a great deal of her initial progress in Italian to 'Signora', the lady she was living with:

> I found that Signora was a very fine language teacher... She was teaching me the way you would teach a younger child to speak the language. She'd be giving me words when I'd stumble. She'd say them for me, I would try and repeat it; it wouldn't be quite right, she'd say it again. She had tremendous patience.

Ms. E. learned a lot of phrases by carefully listening to 'Signora':

> If I knew the words, or at least some of the words in a phrase, when it was used in a practical situation, I'd sort of say 'Click, click, that's how you say it'... As I had heard, I would imitate.

However, after a while, Ms. E. realized that she was very restricted in the kinds of sentences she could construct. Together with other students, she approached the teachers in the so-called

'English Centre' of the town, where English was taught as a second language, and asked them if they would be willing to teach them Italian. One teacher agreed and Ms. E. attended classes twice a week for a period of three hours each time. The content of instruction was grammar as well as conversation, based upon practical situations. It was fairly easy to learn certain grammar aspects, such as tenses, as she heard them actually being used outside the classroom. Ms. E. emphasized that it was only through formal instruction that she got an insight into the structure of the Italian language. She realized that both formal instruction and an informal immersion situation were essential for her progress in language learning:

> I needed that first few weeks... not worrying about grammar, hearing the intonation, where it really made very little sense and where I was exasperated most of the time, because if I tried to say anything, I would, maybe, get out one or two words. I could begin to understand them, but I couldn't make them. I had to learn the grammar in order to do that.

When she compared her own competence in Italian with that of her roommate, her belief in the necessity of formal instruction was confirmed. Her friend never reached a high level of grammatical sophistication. She also had more difficulty in expressing her ideas in Italian.

After three and a half months Ms. E. went on a trip with two Italians and one American. It was during this vacation that she experienced her 'linguistic breakthrough'. As she was the only one who spoke English as well as Italian she became the 'bridge' between

the two languages. She was forced to overcome her inhibition and a certain feeling of uneasiness with the foreign language as she had to translate constantly. By the time she came back, she had suddenly become fluent in Italian. She had gained confidence in her ability to cope with the foreign language. She tried to speak as much as possible and monitored her language through the feedback she got from native speakers:

> I wasn't afraid anymore, I generated sentences... if they weren't correct, people around me told me how to say it. I was on the look-out for clues... I don't suppose there was a lot of correction that I didn't pick up on fairly immediately and put into the language I was building.

Ms. E.'s attempts at communicating as much as possible very often resulted in laughter on the part of the native speakers because of the ambiguity of some of her statements. It was mainly 'Signora' who explained to her the double meaning of what she had said. However, it was done in such a way that Ms. E. never felt ridiculed but was able to share the joke.

Ms. E. found that for a long time her comprehension remained "person-specific", in other words, when listening to somebody for the first time her comprehension level dropped. By the end of the year, however, she was able to understand speakers with different accents talking to each other or to her.

Ms. E. did not only attempt to learn the language, but also to integrate into the Italian community as much as possible. She would have liked to extend her stay if she had been able to find an acceptable position.

When presented with the chart, describing the different proficiency levels, and asked to indicate the level of proficiency she had reached within a year, Ms. E. explained that her ability to comprehend and produce was slightly above working knowledge, but that she had never concentrated on reading and writing skills:

> It was always an aural language. Anything that was written I had to read it out loud, unless it was on a very simple level, in order to hear the sound of it, in order to figure out what was said.

With regard to her present knowledge of Italian, Ms. E. indicated that her competence in comprehension and oral production had decreased due to lack of usage.

When questioned if she was satisfied with her achievement in Italian,Ms. E. stated that she was pleased with her progress during her stay in Italy, but that at present there was no need for her to be fluent. She felt very confident, however, that she could re-activate not only Italian but also French if the circumstances required it. On a few more recent occasions, when it would have been desirable if she could have re-activated her latent French, she discovered that Italian greatly interfered with her attempts at recalling French. Similarly, she had experienced some French interference at the beginning of her Italian immersion and had to suppress French consciously.

In reply to the question of whether she thought she had a gift for languages, Ms. E. emphasized that even though she had to work at learning Italian she nevertheless felt that she had a reasonably good ear for languages as well as a good memory. She also enjoyed

analyzing Italian and looking at language as a system.

After having described her main language learning experience in detail, Ms. E. was asked to indicate which factors she would regard as the most influential ones with regard to her success and her failure in language learning. Ms. E. emphasized that the immersion into an Italian environment and, therefore, the motivation for having to learn to speak the language were the most significant factors at the initial stages. In order to develop her language competence further, she had to take recourse to formal instruction. Commenting on her very limited achievement in French and German, she pointed out that she lacked motivation because the languages were learned in a vacuum without applicability outside the language classroom. She indicated, further, that she would not hesitate to learn another language and that she felt competent at doing it, if, for example, she went to live in another country. "My feeling about learning another language is that it has to be immediately useful."

Discussion of Case Study Five

The following discussion will focus on Ms. E.'s acquisition of Italian, the only language in which she achieved a working knowledge in listening comprehension and oral skills. Brief comments on the other language learning experiences will be included.

Triggering factors. It appears that Ms. E.'s learning of French and Hebrew was initiated mainly by parental pressure and prescribed school curricula. Ms. E.'s general academic orientation may have acted as a triggering factor for her learning of German and

Latin, since -- to our knowledge -- the study of those two languages was not mandatory. Generally speaking, however, it appears that learning the above languages was not a conscious decision on Ms. E.'s part.

When Ms. E. decided to become trained as a Montessori teacher, she consciously chose an Italian training centre, in order 'to kill two birds with one stone', i.e., she felt it was worthwhile trying once more to learn a language, since language learning could be combined with her professional development.

Active task approach. During the interview Ms. E. did not discuss her approach to learning Hebrew, French etc. in detail. She seemed to have followed the teachers' directions and probably involved herself to the extent as was necessary.

When acquiring Italian, Ms. E. took the responsibility for her language learning progress upon herself and actively approached this new language learning task from the very beginning; for example, during her first days in Italy she looked up many words in the dictionary.

Ms. E. exploited all different kinds of learning opportunities for her linguistic advancement. While attending classes on the methods of Montessori, she attempted "to pick up" as much about the new language as possible by paying close attention to the linguistic concomitants of the practical class demonstrations. In addition, she made long lists of useful vocabulary with the help of a dictionary.

The Italian family with whom Ms. E. was staying provided another very important informal learning opportunity for Ms. E..

She practised pronunciation by repeating after 'Signora' over and over again. This Italian lady also was a sort of 'living phrase book', which Ms. E. constantly used by listening carefully to her.

The third type of learning situation, which Ms. E. consciously sought out as an essential supplementary learning environment, was formal instruction which focused mainly on grammar.

Realization of language as a system. Ms. E. became convinced that a thorough knowledge of grammar was essential for her in order to be able to build more complex sentences. After a certain period of time she had realized that she could produce only very simple Italian constructions. Formal instruction gave her the basis for being able to generate sentences, a process in which she was particularly active when she had to play the role of an interpreter between an Italian and a Canadian friend.

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. From the very beginning Ms. E. perceived Italian as a language of communication. Her first attempts at communicating with the help of a dictionary were extremely frustrating and painstaking. Communication in the target language was intensified when Ms. E. was an interpreter, as mentioned above.

In general, Ms. E. attempted not only to communicate in Italian but also to become integrated into the Italian community. She indicated that she would have liked to stay in Italy longer if she had been able to find a position.

Management of affective demands. Like so many other successful language learners Ms. E. also experienced feelings of inhibition and uneasiness when having to use the language. But

she also learned to cope with them. The necessity of having to interpret greatly contributed to her loss of any inhibition in using Italian, even if she was not sure whether her utterances were correct.

As Ms. E. experienced, a sense of humour proved to be important, since many of her utterances caused laughter on the part of the native speakers. She was fortunate in that the ambiguity of her statements was usually explained to her in a very sensitive manner, mainly by 'Signora'.

Monitoring. As Ms. E. reported, 'Signora' initially was the main authority against which she could check her linguistic products. By carefully listening to her, Ms. E. could not only acquire new words, phrases, etc., but also monitor her own performance. She always remained a very sensitive 'source' for explanations or corrective feed-back.

During all phases of her L2 acquisition, Ms. E. was constantly "on the look-out for clues" (p. 122), receptive to any corrections by native speakers, which she immediately integrated into her 'interlanguage'.

Other comments. Ms. E. indicated that she felt she had a good ear for languages, a good memory and grammatical sensitivity; in other words, that she possessed the characteristics of aptitude. However, she also pointed out that she worked extremely hard at acquiring this new language.

It is interesting to note that Ms. E.'s professional reasons for learning Italian or any other future language indicate the preponderance of an "instrumental orientation" (see Gardner and Lambert, 1972:14), although this does not totally exclude the presence

or development of an "integrative orientation" as we have seen in Ms. E.'s case. It appears that both orientations can be present and contribute to success if the learning situations are appropriate.

Case Study Six

Mr. F.'s language learning experience was chosen for a detailed description for two purposes: first, he was one of the few subjects whose present professional activities are in no way related to languages, language learning or teaching; second, although his high school language learning experience was only of limited overall success and the time span between his school period and his latest language learning efforts was approximately fifteen years, Mr. F. nevertheless discovered his personal learning style and developed appropriate techniques.

NAME: Mr. F.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Financial analyst (previously: Mining exploration geologist)

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: French, German, Latin, Spanish*

Mr. F. was born in England and spent the first twenty years of his life in Edinburgh, Scotland. He came from a totally unilingual family and environment and received his first exposure to languages other than English in school.

Mr. F. attended a 'public school'[1]; he began to study French and Latin at the age of eight. He learned French for approximately

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[1] In the British sense, a public school is a private school.

seven to eight years. He discontinued Latin after about six years and took German instead. When asked to describe the way French was taught, Mr. F. reported that the emphasis was on grammer, on translation from French to English and back into French. "There was no emphasis whatsoever on conversational work." French was not spoken in the classroom unless during exercises when the students were asked to translate aloud. Their homework consisted of similar activities, vocabulary study from long word lists, and translations of fairly difficult passages into English and of simpler passages into French. German was taught in the same way. The time allowance for both subjects, as Mr. F. recalled, was one hour per day and five times a week for French and one hour, three times a week, for German. Mr. F. commented on his language learning experience at that time:

> The whole thing was sort of unrealistic, because we had no exposure to conversational French and... the teachers were British, we had no native speakers around.

When Mr. F. entered Edinburgh University, he enrolled in a science program. At that time, it was impossible to combine language study with a full science course. He therefore had no longer any formal training in either French or German. However, during his university years, Mr. F. spent four to six weeks each summer hitch-hiking through Europe. For the first time in his life he actually heard French as it was spoken in France and German as it was spoken by Germans. Summing up his first experience in the second language environment, he reported:

> I found a total mental block; I was too inhibited to even attempt to use the kind of limited conversational ability I had, which was virtually zero.

Mr. F. overcame this "mental block" to the extent that he could order food, ask for directions, though frequently he would not understand the answer. The general effect of travelling on Mr. F., however, was extremely positive:

> This completely revolutionized my attitude to foreign countries, foreign peoples... I immediately had a motivation to learn the language, because I wanted to communicate with people.

In retrospect, Mr. F. felt that at that time he laid the foundations for overcoming his "mental block" in the future, i.e., when faced with another language learning task at a later stage of his life.

When asked if he consciously attempted to improve his linguistic competence while travelling through Europe, Mr. F. recalled that he did not conscientiously write down words or phrases, partly because of the great lack of knowledge, especially in German: "I would have been writing all the time." In his view, the linguistic improvement during this time was limited. However, as previously indicated, the real improvement was his change of attitude:

> I think the improvement came more through experiencing a motivation to want to communicate with people. I hate this feeling of being in somebody else's country and being cut off from everything about the country, from the life, the culture, the people.

At the age of 23, Mr. F. emigrated to Canada. For several months, he lived and worked in Quebec. Contrary to expectation, the Québecois environment did not improve his knowledge of French. Mr. F. experienced a great deal of difficulty in understanding Québecois French. He blamed his lack of exposure to different accents in his initial learning stages for this inability to profit from the

Québecois environment: " You do not develop any flexibility in understanding different accents and different sounds." Another reason cited for this failure to improve his French was the high degree of bilingual competence of his French-Canadian collegues. In order not to waste time, one immediately switched into English.

Reflecting on his present ability in French, Mr. F. indicated that he could carry on a limited conversation with a speaker of European French. His reading ability could still be regarded as 'working knowledge', since he remembered a fair amount of vocabulary. At the end of high school, his reading ability had approached the advanced level. His writing ability, once at the level of working knowledge, had now dropped to 'elementary proficiency'. With respect to German, his competence could hardly be rated as 'elementary proficiency'.

If Mr. F.'s language learning experience had ended at that point of time, his language learning career would not have been unusual or outstanding. It was not until a few years ago that his professional career as a geologist provided him with the very real task and opportunity of learning another language, namely Spanish. He was offered a position as a mining geologist in Costa Rica for six months, provided that he knew or learned Spanish.

A few weeks before his departure for Costa Rica, Mr. F. bought a course book with two accompanying records of conversational Spanish, 'Living language - Spanish'. He studied the first six lessons of the course and "absorbed very carefully and quite

conscientiously the pronunciation and vocabulary up to that point". The Spanish language immediately appealed to him. His knowledge of French and Latin -- though limited -- as well as his native language English proved to be useful instruments for making comparisons in the area of vocabulary and syntax.

By the end of the first week in Costa Rica he found himself living in a very small village, where not one single person spoke any other language but Spanish. His job required directing the local people who were involved in this particular project; he further had to communicate with the Costa Rican government authorities regarding wages, salaries, insurance policies, etc., both in written and verbal form. Fulfilling these duties in Spanish was not a traumatic experience, as one could have expected. On the contrary, "all this I enjoyed immensely. It built up my Spanish very rapidly".

Since it was of extreme interest to find out how Mr. F. tackled this new language learning task and increased his knowledge of Spanish from practically zero to a good working knowledge, he was asked to elaborate on his learning experience. He described it as follows:

> I walked around with a pocket dictionary all day long. I got the people who worked for me to correct me whenever I made a mistake, which was, of course, in every sentence. I eventually developed a relationship whereby I could give them instructions and at the same time they would correct my instructions with regard to language without being embarrassed about it... There was a lot of humour in it. They were rolling on the ground laughing at my first attempt to give a strict order in Spanish... The old sensation of feeling daft had completely gone. I lost all my inhibitions.

In addition, Mr. F. conscientiously studied one lesson a day in a textbook of conversational Spanish and tried to use any new structures and words, which he had learned, the next day. During the day, he also carried around with him a small note-book and wrote down every new Spanish phrase. Mr. F. felt extremely adamant about this specific technique. He emphasized the importance of making this "a conscientious habit".

> No matter what you are doing, if you are working in a mine... or driving a truck... if a new phrase or construction comes up, you must write it down right away -- preferably without taking your hands off the steering -- wheel.

He further stressed that words had to be written down in context, giving a whole sentence or phrase: "This sticks it in your mind much more firmly." Having taken notes during the day, Mr. F. carefully went over them every evening.

Mr. F. took his meals with a Costa Rican family. Since he liked them very much, he felt a strong motivation to communicate with them. Within a short period of time, his ability to communicate in Spanish had tremendously increased. In his opinion, his grammar was probably lacking a great deal, but he doubted if the Spanish spoken by the villagers was much more grammatical than his, since "they were not highly educated people".

Summing up his achievement in Spanish, Mr. F. stated:

> I found myself building up a <u>working</u> knowledge of Spanish, without inhibitions and the ability to recall everything... Mostly, I found, when something new came up, it stuck in my mind very fixedly.

Back in Canada after six months of intensive language learning efforts, Mr. F. attended two Spanish courses at community colleges in order to maintain his knowledge of Spanish. One of these courses met the needs of Mr. F. very well. The teacher's emphasis was on conversation; he successfully drew all participants out of their reserve, he never interrupted them in their attempts to communicate. However, the very technique which Mr. F. had developed and employed so diligently in Costa Rica, namely taking note of everything new and writing it down, was disregarded by this teacher. Mr. F. was not able to and also did not want to give up this learning habit. The teacher also provided the possibility of listening to tapes, a technique which Mr. F. found very useful, since it enabled him to listen to specific sounds, to play back and repeat any aspect as often as possible.

When asked if he was satisfied with his achievement in Spanish as well as in French and German, Mr. F. responded that he was not. He expressed very definite ideas about how he would like to improve his knowledge. Ideally, he would like to spend six months in Germany, six months in France and "end up living in Latin America".

With regard to his personal judgement of whether he considered himself to be gifted for learning languages, Mr. F. indicated that he felt he was strong in languages; he was now convinced that he had a good ear for languages and a good memory for sounds and words. He reported that he did not like analyzing

languages ("I had enough of that at school."), even though he expressed a strong interest in the history and grammar of his own language. He emphasized the value of Latin for crosslingual comparisons. He recommended that Latin be made a compulsory school subject again.

At the end of the informal part of the interview, Mr. F. was invited to comment on his language learning experience as a whole and to indicate what he would regard as the strongest influential factor in his language learning career:

> Total immersion... obviously is the only way to really learn a language... When you are living with a certain group of people and you like them as people you have a very strong urge to want to be able to communicate with them.

Asked to reflect upon possible personality characteristics which might contribute to success in learning a language, Mr. F. commented further:

> I am not particularly extroverted. But when it comes to learning a language I think you've got to have a sense of humour. You've got to be able to laugh at your own mistakes... The important thing is to get the meaning across and only later on, polish up the grammar.

Mr. F. also reported that he experienced feelings of frustration and impatience, but that he learned to cope with them:

> You've got to be realistic! If you can't understand the news bulletin, you can't understand it. There's no point in rushing out and committing suicide from a twenty storey window-- landing on a pile of discarded Spanish textbooks... There is not much hope for you, if a little bit of discouragement is going to stop you. I think what you have to do is make it a bit more interesting for yourself. Go and read a dirty comic book in the language concerned instead of reading a textbook. Go and take out a nice girl in the language concerned.

Discussion of Case Study Six

In the following discussion of the case study in relation to the proposed model, reference will be made to all the languages Mr. F. had learned or attempted to learn.

Triggering factors. Mr. F.'s learning of French, German and Latin was triggered in 'public' school. No information is available whether the study of one or more languages was obligatory or not.

With regard to Spanish, the language in which Mr. F. attained a working knowledge, a professional opportunity which required the knowledge of Spanish initiated his learning of this particular language.

Active task approach. From my personal information about Mr. F., namely that he was a fairly good student regarding his marks, it can be assumed that he responded well to the learning opportunities offered in high school, although he regarded them as very limited. In an attempt to compensate for this limitation-- his lack in oral competence -- he later sought out informal language learning settings. However, he did not manage, or only minimally, to exploit these for his linguistic advancement. His experience in the countries of the target languages resulted in the development of an "integrative orientation" (see Gardner and Lambert, 1972:14), which became a key factor in his language learning approach to Spanish.

If we examine Mr. F.'s reaction to the informal learning environment in Costa Rica, it becomes evident that he not only

welcomed but also exploited the opportunity of learning another language while pursuing a professional activity. This way of language learning is an example of a 'functional approach'. Although he basically enjoyed this learning setting and profited from it, he nevertheless felt the need of supplementing it with self-study. Self-study can be regarded as a kind of formal learning; it demands, however, more initiative and self-control (discipline) on the part of the student than does instruction by a teacher.

Mr. F.'s whole approach to learning Spanish evidences that he actively involved himself in the language learning process from the very beginning. He started to learn Spanish while still at home. In Costa Rica he developed very "conscientious habits", such as taking note of all new words and phrases, writing them down in their context, and studying his entries every night.

Realization of language as a system and as a means of communication. As regards the first aspect, very little information is available in Mr. F.'s report. He indicated that he utilized his knowledge of French, Latin and English to make cross-lingual comparisons in the area of vocabulary and syntax.

It is the second aspect, the realization of language as a means of communication and interaction, which is most prominent in Mr. F.'s language learning history. He explicitly stated that he wanted to communicate with the people he was living with because he liked them very much (see p. 133). Communication in various situations, e.g., giving orders, was an everyday necessity.

Affective demands. As was mentioned earlier, Mr. F. had to learn to cope with his feeling of inhibition when attempting to use the foreign languages, especially in Germany and France. In his Spanish learning experience inhibition was no longer a problem. The possibility to get to know members of another nationality and to learn to communicate with them was a welcome challenge. Mr. F. indicated that he was not particuarly extroverted. He further emphasized the importance of having a sense of humour, of being able to laugh at one's own mistakes.

The important message we can derive from his statements is that being introverted or feeling inhibited are no excuses for failing in language learning. The learner has to learn to overcome these impeding feelings; and Mr. F. has demonstrated that this is certainly possible.

Furthermore, a realistic insight into the language learning task is important. Feelings of frustration and impatience can or will occur, but again it is of importance that the learner does not succumb to them.

Monitoring. As Mr. F. reported, he constantly elicited explicit corrections from native speakers for his linguistic outputs in Spanish.

Other comments. As previously stated, necessity in conjunction with a professional opportunity provided the immediate motivational stimulus to learn Spanish. In the case of Mr. F., it appears, however, that the communicative aspect of language learning played a substantial

role in making him sustain his learning efforts. In the case of Mr. F., the communicative drive has become a characteristic inherent in the learner. It greatly influenced the degree of persistence which Mr. F. showed during the language learning process.

Another learner characteristic may have been aptitude. Mr. F. indicated that he felt strong in languages, that he had a good ear and a good memory for sounds and words.

Lastly, diligence and conscientiousness have to be mentioned as personality factors contributing to Mr. F.'s success in learning Spanish.

Case Study Seven

As the two previous case studies, this language learning history also illustrates the successful acquisition of a new language in different learning settings, e.g., formal and informal, followed by a totally informal learning environment. The major difference between the two preceding case studies and the present one lies in the fact that the acquisition of the language under concern was not an absolute necessity for the fulfillment of a certain function.

NAME: Ms. G.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Ph.D. student in applied linguistics

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: French, Latin, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese[½], Cree

Ms. G. is a Torontonian, born and raised in Toronto by Torontonian parents. She lived in a totally monolingual (English) environment. The only contact with another language before high school was provided through a Dutch housekeeper, who, however, rarely spoke Dutch in the household. Nevertheless, Ms. G. learned a few words of Dutch. As she recalled, she was mainly intrigued by the housekeeper's accent in English. Ms. G. remembered that she herself tried to pronounce the "ch" /ç/ sound. She did not find the language strange or ridiculous; on the contrary, she took it quite seriously. She also was fascinated to learn about Holland.

Another 'language incident' Ms. G. recalled was that, as little girls, she and her friend decided to learn French in order to have a "secret code". They realized after a while, however, that they could not just memorize words but had to use some syntax, too. So they quickly abandoned the idea.

Ms. G.'s first serious language learning experience began in high school. She took French and Latin from Grades 9-13. Since her school also offered German, she took German for six months. At that time, Ms. G. was a member of different after-school clubs, one of which offered Spanish for a brief period of time. So, in addition to the languages studied in school, she also learned some Spanish.

When asked what made her like languages, Ms. G. admitted that she did not really know the reason, apart from the fact that she was fairly successful at learning languages:

> I was pretty successful in all my courses... I wasn't very socially successful; so I was doing academic things in general... I felt good about them.

With regard to the way French was taught, Ms. G. clearly remembered that one teacher emphasized grammar and writing right from the beginning. It was one particular Grade 11 teacher who gained her respect and, in restrospect, her praise:

> He was the holy terror kind. He made you memorize immense verb paradigms. But am I ever glad he did it, because it made you do all that junk that you'd been trying to shuff over for so long... I am eternally grateful to him.

This teacher also stressed spelling. He was one of the few teachers who spoke French in class. Unfortunately, most students did not appreciate his way of teaching.

As previously mentioned, Ms. G. took French up to Grade 13, not, as she indicated, for the language itself, but because she did not want to take science.

Latin was another favourite subject of Ms. G.'s. Not only did she enjoy it, but she also felt that it was useful to her:

> All of a sudden a bunch of things fell into place, The English derivations and French derivations, etc.... it also makes Spanish and Italian easier.

Judging the value of Latin in retrospect, she commented: "I think it made me more flexible in thinking about how a language could operate."

Regarding German and Spanish, Ms. G. took both languages only for six months. She discontinued learning Spanish and German because she felt that she was learning too many languages at the same time. She had enjoyed her short exposure to these languages, especially making up "long big German words".

When entering University of Toronto, Ms. G. enrolled in a program of Art History. French was an obligatory subject for the first year. The French course was not her main area of interest and the teacher "did not make it any more palatable than she had to".

Another language requirement was Italian -- during the second year of university. The teacher followed a textbook and emphasized grammar. Ms. G.'s comment on her experience was: "It was terribly taught... I learned virtually no Italian at all."

Up to this stage in Ms. G.'s life, languages had played a minor part. She had been successful in school and had enjoyed learning languages, but it was more out of a general academic orientation, than out of an inherent interest in languages. Ms. G. rated her knowledge of French at the level of elementary proficiency. No rating was attempted for the other languages.

It was mainly Ms. G.'s following language learning experiences which the interviewer felt to be of general interest. After her university degree in fine arts, Ms. G. went to Japan "to experience Japanese art". In order to maintain a living, Ms. G. decided to teach English as a second language in a missionary school.

Before leaving for Japan, Ms. G. learned some Japanese in a linguistics department at university in a course attended mainly by missionaries. The teacher followed Smalley's Manual of Articulatory Phonetics. Ms. G. thoroughly enjoyed the course and thought "it was done incredibly well". She studied for six weeks, six hours a day, concentrating on the sound system, but simultaneously acquiring a few "grammar kernel sentences".

Subsequently, she was sent to a course for "missionary orientation" in the U.S.A. The program involved local history, culture, and some applied linguistics. The teacher was "demonstrating teaching techniques (for ESL) and getting rid of a lot of your hangups about it, such as 'you can't teach a second language without speaking the other person's language'". The future missionaries came from various parts of the U.S.A. and spoke different dialects. The teacher made them teach phonemic distinctions, which did not exist in their own dialects, to each other. The students were also introduced to elicitation techniques in sessions with native informants. Ms. G. summed up the results the course had for her:

> What it really did for me was... shake my mind up about things. So I think that by the time I got to Japan I was prepared to look at Japanese objectively and not expect, for instance, to write things down, to translate them, etc.... We got a few lectures on the fact that you can't translate all words from one language to another, and that people think about things differently... I was getting sensitized to the fact that the language probably indicated cultural differences.

In Japan, Ms. G. attended a six-month-course in Japanese arranged for missionaries and businessmen. It has to be pointed out that learning Japanese was <u>not</u> a pre-requisite for the position as a teacher of English as a foreign language. The course was conducted by Bible translators, descriptive linguistics, and was, according to Ms. G., "a tremendous course". There were no more than six students in one class. They met for three hours every morning. The first hour was usually spent reviewing what they had learned the previous day. In the second hour, new material was introduced; the

third hour was devoted to practice, which consisted mostly of question and answer exercises. The approach was totally oral. The students had to do written exercises as homework from a book which had been specifically developed by the teachers for this course.

In addition, the students could work in a language laboratory. Although Ms. G. disliked working in a lab, she felt it was good practice because she could hear herself and was thus able to "monitor" her performance. Ms. G. considered one exercise as particularly useful. A recorded dialogue between two people, who spoke very slowly and carefully, was played. The students then discussed the content, vocabulary, etc. of the conversation. Subsequently, the same dialogue was played again, but this time at a normal rate of speech. Ms. G. commented: "That made me really feel good that they were trying to help us so that we could hear the real difference between slow and careful, and normal speech."

Ms. G. lived in a house together with foreigners, some of whom spoke Japanese fairly well. Whenever she needed something from a store, for example, she had the choice of either asking one of her bilingual friends or of doing it herself. Since she felt she could not impose upon her friends all the time, she attempted to become independent, unless it was a really complicated situation: "It was the perfect situation because you just had to speak the language." Ms. G. started with those tasks she felt she could cope with, such as going to a grocery store or a department store: "You could break yourself in gradually."

After six months, Ms. G. started teaching English in a small town. Not only did she teach, but she herself was taught by her students: "They were great informants; they were realizing what they wanted to know in English, therefore, they were quite good at supplying you with what you wanted to know in Japanese."[1] Ms. G. socialized a great deal with her students. After she got to know them better, they usually spoke half Japanese and half English with each other. The students accepted the fact that she wanted to practise her Japanese and "did not feel embarrassed about it". Once her students were fairly confident about her abilities in Japanese, they took her to their Japanese friends, who did not speak any English at all. Ms. G. enjoyed those situations in which she had to speak Japanese. "Then I would make every effort to speak Japanese, and, of course, I wanted to know what they were saying... because there is nothing drier than being translated to."

In addition to intensive contacts with her students, Ms. G. also took advantage of living in a smaller twon. She felt it was very easy to meet people. At night, she and her girl-friend would go to bars in order to talk to people:

> The bars are tremendous. You always get someone to talk to you. As soon as they found out you spoke any Japanese at all, they practically talked your ear off.

Generally speaking, Ms. G. was able to participate in these conversations fairly well, especially since frequently the same questions were asked of her. Difficulties arose only when the speakers "had a heavy dialect".

On the school grounds, especially with students she knew less well, Ms. G. usually spoke English, not only because the students wanted to improve their English, but also because she was aware of the fact that the ability to speak English was a "status symbol", an indication of being educated. "If you speak to someone in Japanese who should be able to speak English, they lose face."

In an aside, Ms. G. also commented on the fact that being in Japan, she almost learned a "third" language, namely a Japanese type of English. ("Their pronunciation makes your hair stand on end.") She felt that the better she learned this 'language', the worse she became as an English teacher; she became less strict and accepted many communication attempts which teachers who had recently arrived from North America would not accept.

Ms. G. spent a total of two and a half years teaching English in Japan. Her competence in Japanese was increasing and she was happy about her progress. She spent the last summer of her stay on an island amidst people who did not speak one word of English. During that time, she had a strange emotional experience:

> That was when I had the biggest identity crisis... I just got so frantic because I couldn't speak English to people, not because I wasn't communicating but just that I felt kind of like a trained bear... People in that area have so little experience with foreigners, I was being treated like a prized possession.

Returning to her school after that summer vacation, she was complimented on her competence in Japanese. Ms. G. reported that she herself had not really noticed the progress she had made. In retrospect, she attributed her termendous improvement to the fact

that she "just had to use /Japanese/ all the time".

How closely intertwined language and culture are became very real knowledge for Ms. G., particularly in the moments of her identity crisis. She elaborated on her experience:

> I went over there with the idea that I really wanted to be friends with the Japanese people and that you could be friends with anybody and that you could have a dialogue... I really felt lonely for a long time, because I couldn't have a dialogue with Japanese people, even English-speaking Japanese people... the language wasn't the problem. Finally, after about a year and a half it occurred to me that it wasn't that people weren't expressing their opinions to me because I was a foreigner--it was that they were trained not to think about certain things that I was used to thinking about. It was the culture much more than the language. As far as the language was concerned, I felt quite successful... It was the cultural part that was most difficult.

After she had returned to Canada, Ms. G. taught English as a second language for several months. Subsequently, she resumed her M.A. studies at the Centre of Linguistics in the University of Toronto. Since one exotic language was required, she opted for Japanese and wanted to write the examination only. However, she was obliged to take another course in Japanese. The oral aspects of the course naturally were extremely easy for her. Reading and writing presented more of a challenge.

In the following year, Ms. G. went to western Canada to develop an English-as-a-second-language program for Cree Indians. She did not have a great deal of contact with monolingual Indians, and the bilingual ones were "so bilingual that you'd be stupid to try to speak their language". She did a small research project with the help of a bilingual Indian.

A second task, the development of Cree curriculum material, took her at Alberta. There she spent a lot of time among Cree Indians who spoke their own language among themselves, but she felt that it was "socially inappropriate" for her "to speak bad Cree", since it was so much easier for all of them to communicate in English. Ms. G. indicated that she was very conscious of the fact that she was the "white from down east" and considered it to be imposing upon the Indians to speak "silly Cree":

> I must admit that this is a very strong thing in my language learning... If I am encouraged to try and if it's appropriate for me to try, I love doing it, but I really don't like doing it, if it's just a silly thing and I really felt it was.

She admitted that it did strike her as "odd" that she was developing curriculum material in Cree and felt "so silly" about learning Cree. She had linguistic material about the language and knew what she was looking for without being able to say anything. Ms. G. pointed out that Cree is a very complicated language. She knew certain morphemes, but in order to know "how it would come out in the surface structure", she had to ask a native informant.

The Cree woman who helped her to write the book proved to be a "terrific" informant. Ms. G. would tell her what she wanted to do and the assistant would give her the appropriate information in Cree. Ms. G. herself began to recognize a lot of Cree words after a while, but she never acquired Cree syntax. She now felt that if she had used one of the few textbooks on Cree she would probably have made greater progress, but somehow she "just

never got quite around to it".

Ms. G. reported that not all Cree Indians appreciated what she was doing. She encountered misunderstanding and even resentment:

> A lot of natives didn't understand what I was doing and thought I was using people like my informant... to give me the credit to write something they should be able to write themselves.

Ms. G. also mentioned the "hot" atmosphere of Indian politics. She herself was involved in a lot of "nasty political questions" (Ms. G. did not elaborate) and indicated, when queried, that she might have reacted negatively to the Indian people, which, in return, might have impeded her language learning. She emphasized, however, that she knew several Indians with whom she "got along famously".

When asked why she had gone to the Indians, Ms. G. replied that it was "an academic challenge". Reflecting on her feelings about her 'Indian' experience, she commented:

> I guess the thing that I really resented or I really couldn't cope with was the really high-powered feeling against whites -- no matter what you did it was wrong. And I am very sympathetic to people who are in a position to be prejudiced against. They weren't prepared to take anything from me even though it was well intentioned, simply because they had had enough of whites. It makes you feel pretty sour sometimes.

Ms. G. emphasized that in order for her to be stimulated to start learning a language she had to experience the feeling of being "left out of things". This had not been the case among the bilingual Indians: "There wasn't any way that I would have been socially any further ahead if I had spoken Cree".

When presented with the table describing the different

proficiency levels, Ms. G. indicated that she had definitely reached a working knowledge in understanding and speaking in Japanese, but, since she had no opportunity at present to speak Japanese, she suspected that her proficiency had somewhat decreased. With respect to reading and writing Japanese, she commented that it was difficult to judge because the language consists of characters: she knew approximately 1000 characters.

As for French, Ms. G. jokingly commented: "I am no worse than I ever was ", which meant that she had an elementary proficiency. Her knowledge of Cree was rated below elementary. In this context, she mentioned that she had recently helped a lady to design a Cree type-writer.

When asked if she was satisfied with her achievement in the different languages, Ms. G. emphasized once more the essential conditions which would motivate her to learn a language:

> If I never had to learn another word of another language... then I wouldn't. As far as I am concerned the motivation is because it is appropriate and necessary for me to speak the other language in order to communicate with somebody whom I really want to communicate with in a social situation or a work situation... There are so many things in the world to learn --for heaven's sake --and you can't learn every language in the world, and I'm so sick of snobbish polyglottism. Somebody who really speaks six languages... /has probably/ been desperate to learn something and he's learned the languages in order to do it. You learn because you want to get some information and learning it /the language/ for its own sake is absolutely meaningless.

When discussing the question of whether she would consider herself to have "a gift" for learning languages, Ms. G. expressed her opinion on this matter as follows:

> I don't think I have a gift for languages any more than I have a gift for getting along with people or thinking about things... It takes a certain intellect and... a certain social type.

With respect to certain characteristics of aptitude, Ms. G. reported that she found she had a very good ear for sound discrimination and an ability to imitate sounds. She did not feel embarrassed making "strange and terrible noises". She indicated, however, that she did not have a good memory: "I get pretty frantic if I don't have a memory aid." For example, in order to establish a basis for correct pronunciation and also a memory aid for Japanese, she memorized the 56 characters of the Japanese phonemic syllabary. Taking notes (writing words, etc. down) had been another kind of memory aid for her.

To conclude the history of her language learning, Ms. G. was asked to highlight the factors which most influenced her achievement in Japanese. She expressed the conviction that the quality of the school in Japan, the good teachers and teaching methods, and, most important, the immediate target language environment had an extremely positive bearing on her level of achievement. She believed that, if French had been taught in a French environment, "it would have made all the difference in the world".

In response to the question whether certain personality characteristics or study habits facilitated her language learning, Ms. G. compared her own approach to learning Japanese with that of two fellow-students of hers. It is considered to be worthwhile reporting these comparisons, since they point to additional character-

istics, which might be important in language learning. Ms. G. described one student as a "culturally narrow and not very bright, very religious lady", who "worried and fussed a lot", worked extremely hard, but was "absolutely hopeless". This student also did not have "this ability to reach out to something new"; she was scared of being in Japan, scared of Japanese food, in short, scared of everything strange and new.

Another student struck Ms. G. as an extremely disciplined student, with excellent study habits, constantly pushing herself to attempt to communicate in Japanese. This girl was very successful. Ms. G. herself had a different approach to tackling the new language learning situation. She developed a study habit of 'self-immersion':

> I treat myself differently. I was more lackadaisical about it, assuming it would come through my pores... I was just waiting for the study habit to 'descend' upon me and it did. I found that I was walking down the street repeating words to myself. It just hit me one day that I had been doing this for days... I was repeating these words, phrases and expressions, and they sank in. It took me a bit longer than this other girl, but it was more suitable for me.

Discussion of Case Study Seven

Since Japanese is the only language in which Ms. G. achieved a working knowledge in listening comprehension and speaking, the model will therefore be discussed mainly with reference to Ms. G.'s acquisition of this language. Comments on other language learning experiences will be included.

Triggering factors. As Ms. G. reported, most of her language learning in high school and at university was triggered by a general academic orientation and/or official requirements. The humorous exception was her first attempt to learn French in order to have "a secret code".

As to Japanese, Ms. G. wanted to go to Japan because of a deep interest in Japanese art. To make this venture financially viable, she decided to teach English as a second language in Japan. It was presumably for these two reasons that Ms. G. considered it to be worthwhile learning Japanese, even though the knowledge of Japanese was not absolutely essential to achieve both goals.

Active task approach. From Ms. G.'s few statements on her early language learning experiences in formal learning situations we can conclude that she generally utilized the learning opportunities, although they provided only limited exposure to the target languages; her positive reaction to the "holy terror" type of teacher may be cited as an example (see p. 141).

Ms. G.'s learning of Japanese is characterized by active involvement on Ms. G.'s part from the very beginning. To start with, she controlled the conditions under which she was going to learn Japanese. She initially selected two different formal learning situations, a linguistic institute and, subsequently, a course for missionaries in the U.S.A. Both courses were very intensive and Ms. G. applied herself totally. The focus of the first course was on pronunciation; the instruction of grammar restricted itself to a

few kernal structures. The second course offered a greater variety, including lectures on Japanese culture.

Ms. G. received the third type of formal instruction in the target country itself. Again the course was fairly intensive. A lot of time was devoted to oral practice in the classroom as well as in the language laboratory, the general emphasis being on listening comprehension and speaking.

Ms. G. developed certain techniques or study habits to aid her memory, such as taking notes or memorizing the characters of the Japanese phonemic syllabary. A practice technique she developed outside the classroom was talking to herself, repeating words, phrases, etc. over and over again, "until they sank in".

Realization of language as a system. The fact that language is a system and that each language has a system of its own seemed to have dawned upon Ms. G. at a very early age. She realized that she could not just memorize French words but that she needed syntax as well. It appears that the "systematic" aspect of language greatly appealed to Ms. G. She mentioned that she enjoyed generating long German noun compounds. She had also enjoyed studying Latin, because it made her "more flexible in thinking about how a language could work" (p. 141).

With respect to Japanese, Ms. G. did not report any strategies or techniques which would indicate a strong emphasis on this aspect. This may be due to the fact that she was not very conscious of her attempts of inferencing and trying out hypotheses. Cross-lingual comparisons, which were frequently mentioned by other interviewees, were not made; this may be explained by the fact that

Japanese is totally different from any western language. But, in a general way, it appears that this strategy is less important in this informal learning situation than the following one.

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. It is this aspect of language learning which in Ms. G.'s case appears to be the most salient feature. Ms. G. stated that when she went to Japan, she really wanted to be friends with the Japanese and she believed that it would be possible to "have a dialogue" with them. Once she was immersed in the L2 environment, communication and interaction with native speakers became objectives.

Ms. G. indicated that it was a gradual involvement, directed first at attempts to fulfill personal needs and then at getting to know Japanese people and making friends, e.g., with her students or the inhabitants of the village in which she was teaching. She consciously sought out and enjoyed communicative situations in which she had to speak Japanese, not only for self-directed purposes, i.e., to increase her oral competence, but also out of a genuine interest in people.

One important aspect Ms. G. mentioned was her "very tolerant and outgoing approach" (see p. 5) towards the target culture, an attitude which differentiated her from a "very narrow-minded" fellow student and which certainly facilitated realizing language as communication.

Management of affective demands. It appears that Ms. G. tackled the language learning task with a very relaxed and confident attitude. She was not embarrassed to produce strange sounds and to

make mistakes. The new task generally seemed to present more of a challenge than a problem.

Despite this very favourable attitude towards the learning task, the target language and culture Ms. G. experienced a serious identity crisis. When she spent one summer on an isolated island, she realized that due to cultural differences she was and would always remain an outsider. Although not explicitly stated, Ms. G. learned to cope with this emotional experience; it did not deter her from developing her competence in Japanese further and to socialize with Japanese people.

Monitoring. Ms. G. reported very little about the way in which she monitored her performance. It can be assumed that the native speakers with whom she had close contact provided the main source for corrective feedback.

Other comments. Ms. G.'s report on her acquisition -- or rather non-acquisition -- of Cree deserves a separate comment. She accepted the task of developing curriculum material for the Cree Indians as "an academic challenge". Ms. G. had linguistic material about Cree and knew certain morphemes, but could not and made no attempt to generate sentences on a trial basis. Wanting to communicate, an aspect which had been so effective in learning Japanese, did not result in her learning Cree, partly because most Indians spoke English, but, according to Ms. G., mainly because she felt it was "socially inappropriate" for her to try to communicate in bad Cree.

This sensitivity displayed towards the Indians is more than the 'interactional sensitivity' we have observed in the case of Mr. D.; it is more of a 'social sensitivity', extended towards the whole target language group. One wonders how far the resentment Ms. G. experienced had a dampening effect on her willingness to learn Cree and whether she over-reacted. If she had tried to learn Cree, she might have overcome some of the hostility on the part of the Indians.

Considering Ms. G.'s experience as a whole, the question once again arises: Whom do we call a good language learner? It would be rather restricted if we only labelled a person a good language learner who has an inherent interest in languages per se and would attempt to succeed in all (or most) of the languages he is exposed to. Ms. G. has shown great potential for language learning. It therefore appears to be reasonable to grant learners the choice of selecting certain languages (without value attachment) and accepting their reasons as valid, whether they are of social, professional, psychological or of general character.

Case Studies Eight and Nine

The following two case studies illustrate the systematic approach of two language learners to learning a large number of languages. The first case study describes the 'linguistic' career of an individual who discovered his inherent interest in languages by chance and subsequently developed systematic strategies and techniques to learn a great variety of languages.

Case Study Eight

NAME: Mr. H.

AGE GROUP: 51-65

OCCUPATION: Professor of anthropology

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: Spanish*, Russian*, Chinese, Tagalog, Japanese*, German**, Swedish**, French*, Latin, Swiss, Ancient Greek, Old Norse, Middle High German, Polish, Czech, Old Church Slavonic, Lithuanian, Danish, Sanskrit, Hittite, Serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian, Gothic, Iroquoian, Philippine, Runis, Thai, Arabic, Miako, Norwegian, Dutch, Italian

Mr. H., an American in his mid 50's, was born in Philadelphia, but as his father was in the navy, Mr. H. spent his childhood in various places such as South Carolina, Samoa, California, Philadelphia, New York and Panama. He regarded English as his native language and as a child was exposed mainly to English, even when overseas, since there the family always lived on an American military base.

Mr. H. encountered his first foreign language experience at

school, in Grade 9, when he chose Spanish to fulfil the language requirement. He was not particularly interested in languages and selected Spanish only because he had heard that it was the easiest language to learn. Mr. H. said that he did not do very well in it. During the three years that he studied Spanish, all instruction was in English; there was no contact with native speakers. After having "struggled" to learn the rules, Mr. H. finally learned how to translate and read such classics as "Don Quijote". In general, he considered it a "very passive kind of activity". He illustrated the effectiveness of his high school language learning experience with the following anecdote:

> I can remember that in my first year of college I heard a foreign language being spoken and asked somebody what language it was, and was surprised to hear it was Spanish!

After high school, Mr. H. went to university in New York to study engineering. One evening in his first year, when he was looking for something to do, Mr. H. reported that he walked by a cinema where a Russian movie was playing. He found the title interesting, and since he had never seen a foreign film before, he went in "out of curiosity". The movie was in Russian with English subtitles. Mr. H. said that he was "very much intrigued by the sound of the language -- it sounded very exciting", and he was also intrigued by the acting and photography -- "Everything was somehow exotic to me." The next week he went to see another Russian film, a musical. Mr. H. stated: "I was very much captivated by the actress... I fell in love with her... and by the music." He saw the

film seven times and practically memorized the scenario in Russian. He also bought an English-Russian dictionary and tried to figure out some of the structure of the language from a few phrases listed at the back. Mr. H. then started buying the two local Russian newspapers printed in New York, and tried to translate them with the aid of the dictionary. However, because he had many problems with the structure, Mr. H. bought himself a grammar book and did one lesson a day on his own, with only the movies to help him with his pronunciation. He found the language, the grammar as well as the sound of it, "absolutely fascinating".

Mr. H. became so involved in learning Russian that he began to do poorly in his engineering courses. He eventually quit engineering and enrolled in a Russian and a Chinese course while waiting to take an entrance examination for the military academy. Japanese, French and German interested him too, because he wanted to learn all the languages that had the most world-wide speakers. However, he was limited to taking Russian and Chinese.

This was his first formal training in Russian. He remarked that it did not really matter how the Russian course was taught because he was very motivated to learn Russian. He was interested in everything Russian and felt that for him Russia was a "great, exotic new experience, full of exotic people". At the time there were 17 Soviet students at the university, and the Russian teacher arranged a tea for the language students and the Soviet students. After this meeting, Mr. H. said he used every opportunity to be with the

Soviet students. He dated a Russian girl all winter and tried to practise Russian as much as possible. The Russian students were always willing to correct him, which Mr. H. felt was good because he wanted to speak Russian as well as possible.

Mr. H. said that he did well in both the Russian and the Chinese course. The Russian course was taught in English, even though the teacher was a native speaker. The emphasis was on grammar and translation, and there was no conversation. The Chinese course was taught in much the same way, but Mr. H. was not as motivated. Progress was also very slow in the Chinese class.

Shortly after his experience with Russian and Chinese, Mr. H. was drafted into the army and was sent to the Philippines. There he attempted to learn some Tagalog, again "out of curiosity", but did not get very far. He learned some structure and pronunciation, and he talked to people. He also bought books to supplement his informal language learning -- "I was very visually oriented... I would listen to how they pronounced it and then I would try and read it in the book and see what I was supposed to do." Mr. H. further stated that, by this time, his ability to pronounce a foreign language was "well above average", mainly because of his previous language learning experience.

While in the Philippines, Mr. H. "stumbled" into a Spanish speaking community and spent all his free time learning Spanish "by talking with people". In particular, he conversed frequently with a child and his grandfather, both of whom knew no English. He also

used his grammar book and dictionary, so that together with the oral practice, his Spanish improved considerably in a short time.

Mr. H. was then transferred to Japan for a year. He reported that the first thing he did in Japan was "to discover the Russian community". He spent the entire time, except when he was working, with the Russians. However, he did make an effort to learn some Japanese, As usual, he bought several books, but he also felt that for him practice was essential -- "I was people-oriented too... I went out and tried these things on people... I didn't just concentrate on the book." Mr. H. said that he succeeded in getting a girlfriend in Japan who taught him how to write the characters. Although he learned some Japanese, Mr. H. still made the most progress in Russian.

From Japan, Mr. H. was posted to Germany where he began to seriously study German on his own -- "I went through my books... my method was usually a lesson a day and of course I supplemented it with meeting people." He got to know an older man who could speak no English. Mr. H. was almost "adopted" as a son by this man. He was given books to read and received a lot of help with his German. In one year he learned to speak German as well as he spoke Russian.

While in Germany, Mr. H. went to Sweden for two weeks. He bought a grammar book and did his own "crash course" to finish the book while he was there. At the end of this time, he was able to carry on a limited conversation in Swedish. Mr. H. felt that the process of learning Swedish was made easier because he could recognize

sound correspondences between Swedish and German and he also made "maximum use of inventing Swedish words" as he went along. Using sound correspondences and 'inventing' words were both techniques he had used to some extent when learning German as well.

Mr. H. stressed the importance of having "good contacts" so that one can meet people when in a country for the first time. He had had good contacts in Germany and Sweden, and also in France which was his next stop after Sweden. He stayed in France for a month, where he began to learn French, again making use of his dictionary-grammar book method.

Shortly thereafter, Mr. H. was released from the army and went back to the United States to finish university. He entered second year and studied French and Latin. Sound correspondences interested him in particular but he also developed a "considerable sophistication for syntax and morphology". In addition to French and Latin, he took a course in German which gave him the opportunity to spend his third year of university studying in Zürich, Switzerland. There he took courses in economics and political science as well as in German. During this year Mr. H. developed a new learning technique:

> I started writing down new words and memorizing them... just as they came along... then I would go over them and if I knew the word I would mark it off... or I would check the words I didn't know... I've used that technique ever since to build up vocabulary.

The Frankfurt accent which was acquired when he first learned German was kept in Switzerland, according to Mr. H., but he did make a conscious effort to learn the Swiss language via a German textbook.

It was the first foreign language he learned through another foreign language, since previously he had always used English as his "starting point". He also studied French, but did not learn to converse very fluently although he could read a lot of literature.

In Switzerland, Mr. H. met his first wife. She was Austrian and could not speak English. Consequently, during their first three years of marriage they spoke only German until his wife knew English well enough that they could use either language.

For his senior year at university, Mr. H. went back to the United States. He studied Ancient Greek because he wanted to "branch out" in Indo-European languages. He also took more Latin and Russian, a course in linguistics taught by André Martinet, and "boldly" enrolled in a second-year Swedish course -- not having had the first-year course -- because he planned to study in Sweden.

Mr. H. spent one year in Sweden, taking courses in Old Norse, Middle High German and Comparative Indo-European. He also studied Russian, Polish, Czech, Old Church Slavonic and Lithuanian -- "I could have all the languages I wanted now and I was taking all of them... nobody told me not to do it." All courses were in Swedish, and Mr. H. reported that in that year he mainly acquired a great knowledge of Swedish and an understanding of Danish by listening to a Danish radio station.

Mr. H. went back to the United States and enrolled in the Yale School for Linguistics. Besides the linguistic courses, he studied Sanskrit, Hittite, Serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian, Gothic,

Iroquoian, Philippine, and Runis, although he did not learn to speak any of these languages, and Gothic was the only one he learned to read.

After he received his Ph.D., Mr. H. got a job with the State Department as a "Scientific Linguist" training diplomats. He was in charge of German and Dutch instruction and worked with Russian, Thai and Japanese as well. He had never learned Thai himself, but found that it was necessary to have supplementary materials to the textbook which was "hopelessly inadequate". Mr. H. reported: "I took all the vocabulary and all the rules and made all the mathematically possible sentences." He then went to a native speaker who told him which of the sentences were actually possible in the Thai language. In this way, Mr. H. learned how to pronounce Thai and also learned some structure and vocabulary himself. In addition to the experience with Thai, the job provided Mr. H. with his first intensive exposure to Dutch. Generally, he had to supervise instruction in the languages and to give instruction where the native speaker teacher was not able to, as, for example, in phonology.

The State Department later sent Mr. H. to Japan to run their Japanese language program for diplomats. He spent five years there, two of which he spent learning to speak the language fluently himself. Mr. H. considered Japanese a difficult language to learn because he could not make the sound and word comparisons based on other languages. He did not find the pronunciation or grammar difficult, but reading the characters and remembering vocabulary presented great problems:

> ... words don't remind you of anything but each other... you can't just pick up a newspaper and get anywhere because it's not written in Roman letters... it's hard to get an easy access to the language.

Although he was still "struggling" with the problem of reading Japanese, Mr. H. said he could speak it quite fluently. His second wife being Japanese, he has had more opportunity to use it.

After he returned from Japan, Mr. H. worked in the Foreign Service Institute where he was in charge of the Polish and Arabic programs. He had to sit in on Arabic classes to learn Arabic himself, and he was told by the instructor that for a North American he had the best pronunciation of Arabic that the instructor had ever heard.

The most recent language learned by Mr. H. was Miako, a dialect of Japanese, which he worked on during his sabbatical leave. It was the first language he tried to learn by the "field method technique":

> From 9 till 12 I had my interview... during the afternoon I would go over my notes and then in the evening I would go out and inflict myself on the helpless population! Of course I was working with sound correspondences again because this language is very closely related to Japanese.

Of the languages he had maintained, Mr. H. reported that German was his best language in every sense. When it came to understanding the spoken language, Swedish was his second best language and then Russian, Japanese, French and Spanish. He also understands Danish and Norwegian quite well, but mainly because of their similarity to Swedish. As far as actually speaking the language was concerned, Mr. H. considered Japanese to be his most fluent language after German, although he may be able to express himself

better in Swedish. Russian, Spanish, and French followed, and in other languages such as Dutch, Chinese, Polish, Italian, and Arabic, he could only satisfy basic needs.

Mr. H. claimed to have no trouble at all reading German or Swedish. He can also read Norwegian, Danish and French with very little effort. Spanish and Russian came next on his list, but Japanese was way down on the list -- "There are any number of languages I can read easier than Japanese." As to writing, his efforts have been largely confined to letter writing, except in German and Swedish since he studied in these countries. Otherwise he has had opportunities to correspond in Russian, Japanese and Spanish.

When questioned if he ever felt embarrassed about speaking any of the foreign languages, Mr. H. admitted that it did occur. However, as he emphasized, one must realize that "one can't be embarrassed. In order to learn, you must make mistakes. People with whom you speak are not going to be surprised if you make mistakes --it's not going to upset them".

Finally, Mr. H. did not attribute his overall success in language learning to some gift, but rather to the development of a skill at language learning over the years:

> I understand phonetics, I know the phonology, I know what to look for when learning to pronounce, I know how to put my tongue in the right place... my training has taught me to look for such things as intonation patterns, rhythm, length and stress... I have acquired an ability to learn to speak rather rapidly in what is not the word order of my native language and also to assemble inflected forms which would not be found in English.

Commenting on a further factor which aided his language learning, Mr. H. said:

> I've never lost my interest in languages... it's an aspect of motivation... it's the fun I get out of it... I like to play around with foreign languages -- and girls!

Discussion of Case Study Eight

The languages in which Mr. H. achieved a working knowledge or an advanced knowledge were as follows: Spanish, Russian, Japanese, French (working knowledge); German and Swedish (advanced knowledge). In the discussion of the model we will mainly refer to these languages.

Triggering factors. A large variety of factors stimulated Mr. H.'s interest in learning the above languages. According to the principle of 'saving energy and effort', Mr. H. chose Spanish to fulfill the language requirements; he had heard that Spanish was the easiest language to learn. Later, through accidental circumstances, Mr. H. was confronted with a Spanish speaking community and the desire to communicate became a second triggering factor.

The circumstances of his initiation into learning Russian are almost anecdotal: chance, a romantic response to the sound of Russian and to one of its speakers, a film actress. At a later stage, his orientation towards people stimulated him to continue with Russian.

Sociological considerations awakened his interest in Japanese, French and German -- Mr. H. wanted to learn all the languages that had the most world-wide speakers. The deeper reason underlying this interest is difficult to determine; perhaps Mr. H. had the desire to

be a cosmopolitan! His interest certainly reveals a lack of ethnocentricity.

Professional circumstances (e.g., army) provided the actual opportunity to learn Japanese, Swedish, German and French. In sum, it appears that the concrete opportunity to learn a language, namely by being in the country, as well as being "people-oriented", as Mr. H. called it, were the main triggering factors.

In addition, an academic interest in languages per se, which may have developed over time, initiated the learning of all the other languages.

Active task approach. If we examine Mr. H.'s reaction to the different learning settings he found himself in, it becomes apparent that he accepted and exploited all learning situations to his advantage, whether they were formal or informal. The only exception was his initial learning experience with Spanish. The way Spanish was taught in school was not very effective, nor did Mr. H. do anything about it. At this stage he had not identified himself with the learning task at hand.

Mr. H.'s case study is an excellent example of someone who actively involved himself in the language learning process, e.g., memorizing the scenario of the Russian film; developing a systematic self-study approach, armed with a dictionary and a grammar book as basic learning tools; or practising his oral skills, whenever possible.

Realization of language as a system. Mr. H.'s language learning history provides several examples for this aspect of the language learning model. He made systematic cross-lingual comparisons

in phonology, morphology and lexic. He 'guessed', using Rubin's term, e.g., he invented Swedish words (see p. 163); he tried to figure out the structure of Russian during his initial encounter with Russian, by analyzing a few phrases listed at the back of a dictionary. He made inferences about the surface structure of Thai, by using rules and generating all mathematically possible sentences (see p. 165).

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. From the very beginning (again with the exception of his initial learning of Spanish) Mr. H. attempted to develop "good contacts" (p. 163) with speakers of the target languages. In all his six major languages he had close friends among the native speakers. One occasionally gets the impression that he contacted native speakers more for the sake of improving his productive competence than for the purpose of communicating with other people.

Affective demands. Very few problems were mentioned by Mr. H. in this respect. He indicated that occasionally he felt embarrassed to speak the foreign languages, being afraid of making mistakes. But he quickly realized that making mistakes was a necessity in language learning.

Generally speaking, it becomes apparent that Mr. H. was very excited about the prospect of a personal involvement with native speakers of the foreign language. In this respect, it is inappropriate to refer to affective 'demands'; affective 'challenge' would be a more appropriate term.

Monitoring. Mr. H. monitored his performance in the different languages in two ways: (1) by checking against written authorities, e.g., grammar books, textbooks; (2) by using native

speakers for corrective feedback.

Other comments. It may be of significance that not even Mr. H. claimed that he had a gift for languages, but rather maintained that he developed a skill at language learning over the years. This statement may be encouraging for language teachers; perhaps they could help their students develop a skill in language learning, for example, by teaching them language learning techniques or, in general, by helping them to identify their individual ways of learning.

Despite this indication that initial aptitude may not be of great importance, Mr. H. appears to have a certain ability which has been identified as a characteristic of aptitude, namely the ability to pronounce foreign sounds very accurately. Mr. H. mentioned that his training in phonetics and phonology promoted this ability. The question arises whether or not certain aspects of aptitude are trainable (see Politzer and Weiss, 1969).

A few other questions arise from Mr. H.'s case study: What made Mr. H. persist in learning Japanese, Spanish, French, etc. and not any of the other languages he had come into contact with? Is the decision to concentrate on one language and not on the other a conscious or an unconscious one? To what extent do accidental circumstances influence this choice? If one reflects on Mr. H.'s initial experience in learning Spanish, it appears that a certain maturity level is necessary so that the student actually identifies himself with the learning task. A more important factor appears to be the 'emotional bond' the learner develops to the target language and its speakers.

Case Study Nine

The following case study is another example of someone who made language learning into a life-long occupation. The interviewer found it difficult to establish the exact sequence of language learning events. Mr. J.'s experience was so rich that the conversation triggered off a 'stream of consciousness' with a multitude of associations and general comments on language learning.

NAME: Mr. J.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Professor of Anthropology

LANGUAGES LEARNED AND MAINTAINED: German**, French**, Rumanian**, Icelandic**, Italian, Spanish, Albanian, Greek (classical and modern), Russian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Latin, Mohawk, Swahili, Gaelic, Hungarian, Hittite, Japanese, Lithuanian

Mr. J. was a native-born American from Massachusetts. He was brought up in a predominantly English-speaking environment, including his home as well as the immediate neighbourhood. There were only two exceptions: his paternal grandmother spoke Canadian French and he recalled that French was sometimes used as a "secret language", which aroused his curiosity, but he never learned any French from his grandmother. The other language he heard in his childhood was Swedish: a friend of his mother's taught him to count to ten in Swedish before he could count in English. He was aware of the fact that other languages existed and, with amusement, he recalled

that he had a theory how they were related to each other:

> I imagined that if you took the alphabet and changed the order around you'd get another language; so all I had to learn eventually... was in which order I had to put the letters in order to get the other language.

Mr. J. had to abandon this theory when he actually started to learn another language, namely Latin in Grade 9. For the following four years, he continued with Latin. It was taught by the 'grammar-translation method'. His first teacher supplemented the course with Latin songs and the Lord's prayer. As a student he was told that Latin was a "more logical language" than English and that learning Latin was "good training for the mind". Mr. J. emphasized that this view was "no more true of Latin than of any other language", but at that time he believed his teacher. He enjoyed Latin so much that he continued studying it at university. He indicated that he was still in the process of learning Latin.

When asked how he studied Latin, Mr. J. mentioned that he had to make "a conscious effort to memorize vocabulary" and that he did not succeed too well: "When words came to me it was... out of some context... language vocabulary I have never enjoyed memorizing and it doesn't come that easily." In order to facilitate remembering the meaning of words, he would write translations between the lines of the foreign text. "I would remember words by the passage or at least the part of the page they were on."

During high school, Mr. J. also began studying Greek on his own, with the help of books his Latin teacher had given to him. He did not learn a lot of Greek, the reason being: "When I learn

languages by myself, I tend not to study them systematically. Even now I sort of enjoy looking up things that I am interested in -- structures, vocabulary, etc.." He indicated that he often preferred reading reference grammars to reading textbooks, since grammar books were very organized and he knew what to expect.

Mr. J. encountered his next formal language learning experience in his first year at Harvard University. He wanted to learn Russian and recalled that he prepared himself for the course in advance. Russian had aroused his curiosity several years before. He had looked up the Russian alphabet in Webster's dictionary, which listed all the letters with their equivalents, "including the occasional misunderstanding". For example, the definition of 'palatalization' as explanation for the Russian 'soft sign' (b) was incomprehensible and he believed it was like an 'h'. This misunderstanding led, of course, to a very strange pronunciation of Russian words, which however was easily remedied when he attended the language course. The course offered grammar sections as well as conversation classes. He attended both "religiously", quite in contrast to other academic subjects, because he enjoyed the Russian classes. His grammar teacher was so interesting that Mr. J. regularly stayed after class to discuss certain aspects with him, especially Indo-European origins of Russian words. He found Russian grammar generally "easy and enjoyable". The conversation class, which was attended by two students, met twice a week. In addition, Mr. J. had conversation exercises with a White Russian priest. It took him a while to

figure out that the differences between the pronunciation as he heard it at university and from the priest were due to the fact that the priest spoke a different dialect of Russian.

Asked about his study habits, Mr. J. reported that he did "the minimum possible at home". However, he read a fair amount on grammar, since grammar was of particular interest to him, and, above all, he talked to himself. He also remembered that he practised aloud for several months to trill the Russian'r', again following the written instruction "of beating the tip of /your/ tongue against the roof of /your/ mouth" which he found very hard to do. One "miraculous" day he realized that this sound was not any different from the noise he used to make as a little boy when playing aeroplane, "so I just had to learn making an aeroplane noise in the middle of words".

Since Mr. J. failed his first term examinations in math and science, two subjects he wanted to major in (he had fallen asleep during the examinations), his advisor suggested that he concentrate on subjects he liked, which apparently were languages. Mr. J. was by no means in agreement. He felt it had just been bad luck that he had failed those two subjects. He did not give up math and science, but, to follow his advisor's suggestion, he also took the only two languages which he could begin in the second semester, namely Rumanian and Hittite.

When learning Hittite, Mr. J. came into contact with German, because the Hittite textbook the professor recommended and

used was written in German, and he also had to refer to a Hittite/ German dictionary. Thus he learned not only Hittite but also a great deal of German. The translation process was rather complicated: Mr. J. had to translate from Hittite into German and back into English, and, as expected, errors in translation would occur,e.g., Hittite 'taku' (if), German 'wenn', English 'when'. Since the Hittite course was a graduate class, it was taken for granted that the students knew French and German. The professor was very surprised to find after several weeks that Mr. J. knew no German at all: "Nobody had bothered to ask." Despite these 'handicaps' Mr. J. enjoyed this class very much and "it turned /me / on to linguistics thoroughly... And I learned a lot about language learning from linguistics."

Asked to elaborate on his approach to language learning, Mr. J. first commented on one problem in language learning, namely that of language retention. Looking back on all the languages he had learned for a fairly brief period of time, such as Greek and Italian, Mr. J. reported that he only remembered things he had memorized, such as songs, poems, etc. This experience led him to the conclusion that rote memorization served a good purpose, although he had hated it in the earlier stages of his language learning: "One has to have in one's head a certain minimum corpus thoroughly memorized, that one is... able to put out mechanically." The only exception had been his learning experience with modern Greek. During his stay in Rumania (which will be reported on later), Mr. J.

went to Greece for six weeks, concentrating on similarities between Rumanian and Greek and studying grammar for the whole time he was there; however, he did not memorize vocabulary, songs, etc.

> I studied the grammar in the context of speaking it... As a result, my Greek sticks with me today much better without even any conscious practice... I was forced to speak, living with Greek students who quite unashamedly corrected me, which was essential.

In addition, he always checked what he heard against what was written in grammar books.

Mr. J. emphasized once more the importance of being corrected when learning a language. When encountering a language learner, he would always interject corrections. Similarly, he always asked native speakers to do the same to him. "If you don't get corrected on the spot, you'll learn your mistakes and learning your mistakes is fatal."

After his first year of university, Mr. J. attended a French course at summer school. He indicated that he has continued learning French until the present time, which made French into one of his "main languages". Asked about his approach to learning French, Mr. J. enumerated two "essentials":

> I used to ride around with my pocket dictionary... I also had a French-speaking girl-friend -- these, I think, are two essentials.

He remembered that he would ride along on his bicycle when all of a sudden a word would come to his mind, so he would stop and look it up:

> And... the only way that I learned vocabulary I found was by looking it up when I was curious and not at other times and then it worked very well. I was astoundingly successful that summer.

To continue with the biography of his language learning, Mr. J. reported that one summer, before returning to college, he travelled along the Mexican border and learned some Spanish in a very informal way: "I just listened to what somebody said or asked him how you said this... it was just a pure lark." He did not write down any words. Although he had earlier been of the opinion that one had to write words, etc. down in order to remember them, he began to experience that the "things" he learned best were those he did not write down. He admitted that he had a visual memory to a certain extent, as had been evidenced in his learning of Latin. However, Mr. J. indicated that he could remember words very well if he was "aware of the segmentation"; "This is why the analysis of sounds is pretty essential."

Back at university he audited or enrolled in a number of language classes, usually for about a year. He continued with Rumanian and started classical and modern Greek, Swahili, Gaelic, Albanian and Serbo-Croatian as well as Japanese in a field course. The Serbo-Croatian teacher taught grammar very traditionally, with lots of exercises. Since he knew the language well, he was able to give many illustrative examples. Mr. J. enjoyed the course and developed "a friendly feeling" towards the language. The teacher provided "a rough overview of the language", which Mr. J. felt was "essential at the beginning". Details could always be filled in later.

Commenting on his learning approach in general, Mr. J. pointed out that, although there may be a few essential techniques for

learning a language, the way he had learned each language was different due to his personal "evalution". He considered it to be an advantage to have good scientific materials available. The Greek grammar he was using, for example, had everything transcribed into the International Phonetic Alphabet, which facilitated achieving accuracy in pronunciation. It was also very traditionally arranged, "so that you could find things". Mr. J. pointed out that languages for which no materials were available were naturally much more difficult to learn. Later in his life, he had to learn about and apply techniques of field work and field analysis (which will be reported on later).

Apart from having good textbooks, the teacher himself had a certain degree of influence on Mr. J.'s achievement in learning languages. "When I have a teacher who turns me off I don't tend to learn as much." He happened to have a very "stimulating" teacher of Italian and a very nice Viennese teacher in a German conversation class, two languages he learned outside university when he interrupted his university studies for a year. As in the case of Russian he was exposed to different dialects of German. Mr. J. developed a "strong attachment" to his Viennese teacher and learned "Wienerisch". Mr. J. indicated that his teachers had an influence on his motivation, which he considered to be a more important factor than the teaching methods:

> The methods have changed from time to time, but when the motivation changes the amount of what I learn changes. This is an important thing and I think it is much more important than pedagogical methods in the long run.

Regarding different methods of teaching and learning languages, e.g., the traditional versus the aural/oral approach, Mr. J. mentioned that he preferred a "modernized" traditional method. He would not support the technique of reciting paradigms. The one aspect of the traditional method he emphasized most was "the necessity of learning rules -- externalizing rules, making them explicit rather than simply memorizing things as the behaviourists would have us do". He suggested the term "rational grammar" or "rule-based grammar".

Mr. J. further recommended that the rules be worked out by linguists and not by traditional grammarians. He also mentioned that he did not mind having rules presented to him and not having to deduce them. If he had to deduce rules from a given text, he would like to be able to check his deductions against written versions in order to test his hypotheses efficiently,i.e., he does not want to have to spend too much time on their verifications and he would also like to guard himself against internalizing wrong rules, which would be extremely difficult to unlearn.

A change in his approach to language learning came with his stay in Rumania. Before leaving for a summer course in Rumania, Mr. J. memorized sentences in a phrase book, but he did not remember them very well when he arrived in Rumania. He had a very "lopsided" knowledge of the language. He had been taught old and modern Rumanian simultaneously and could remember the history of Rumanian, but very little of the language itself. The summer course proved to

be rather uninteresting. The emphasis was on "reciting rules, a lot of rote work, which treats learners as children, and when learners are not children, they don't like being treated as children". Very few teachers attempted to add some "fun" to the courses, which decreased his own motivation to learn. The only class he faithfully attended was one in which the teacher taught songs.

Generally speaking, he profited very little from the course. What he did learn that summer, however, was Polish, because "the Polish students were equally bored... and also did not feel like attending classes. So we just took off... and they taught me Polish". Mr. J. also had a Polish girl-friend. In this context, he mentioned that he had a girl-friend in just about every language he had learned:

> The language has to be the language of somebody. Until I know somebody in that language and care for them, I don't give a hoot about the learning of the language.

Although Mr. J. modified this last statement-- he had studied Lithuanian out of his linguistic interest in Indo-European languages-- he nevertheless emphasized the importance of personal involvement with speakers of the target language as a motivational stimulus. The way he learned Polish was fairly unstructured. He "did a little bit of linguistic thinking" about the language but did not really analyze it, nor did he put down on paper what he was learning.

One unfortunate incident, which occurred during the first few weeks of his stay in Rumania, turned out to be good luck. Due to food poisoning, Mr. J. had to spend one month in a Rumanian hospital.

He did not have his books with him, which proved to be an important factor, since he had already started to learn "stilted" Rumanian of the "it is I-type" at the summer school as well as from his books. In hospital, he experienced that "the more colloquial you speak, the more people are going to treat you with less formality, and consequently, the more easily they are going to correct you... By learning it /Rumanian/ the way people use it and not the way they ought to use it, you join in with them".

The change in approach to language learning, which was triggered off through his hospital stay, was "simply talking to people, not writing things down" (although he did some writing down later). In Mr. J.'s opinion there are essentially two approaches to language learning depending on the amount of exposure:

> When your exposure is less than everyday or less than continual, then you have to be analyzing;... where you have plenty of time on your hands, as I had in Rumania... you don't have to spend the time analyzing the forms because gradually you'll be seeing the analysis of them; this is taking for granted that you <u>can</u> analyze them.

Mr. J. pointed out the importance of first breaking down one's inhibitions and learning to talk freely to people before beginning to analyze the language. He described these initial phases of learning Rumanian as follows:

> You have to get an overview of the language, then you have to pick up enough conversational vocabulary that you know how to use, and then you take the two things together and start building sentences and have people correct you.

Being a "naturally talkative person", Mr. J. was desperate to communicate in hospital. He therefore indulged in this game of "making up things" in order to communicate and he would receive confirmation or correction from the native speakers.

Mr. J. stayed in Rumania for a total of two years, working at the Centre for Dialectology. With respect to his level of achievement, he indicated that he had frequently been mistaken for a native Rumanian. Since he learned the language from native speakers, he could not be identified as a foreigner through "oddities of construction" or the "so-to-speak correctness of speech". He knew different stylistic levels, for example, forms appropriate to express polite social distance; however, he was not interested in acquiring constructions "which simply show your breeding".

Another language Mr. J. came into contact with in Rumania was Albanian. He had studied Albanian for several years at Harvard; however, only as a written language. He had written an undergraduate honours thesis on Albanian. It was in Rumania that he heard Albanian spoken for the first time. He was amazed at how much Albanian he could actually understand and produce. Since he learned Albanian via German and Rumanian, he always recalled those two languages when searching for the meaning of an Albanian word.

This new focus on language as it was actually spoken, and this ability of "being able to talk with other people naturally" meant something like a "watershed" for Mr. J. and influenced his later language learning experiences. For example, the only German

he had previously learned had been "a very correct Hochdeutsch". When spending two months in Germany, partly with a friend whom he had met in Rumania, he learned slang; he also learned about possible abbreviations such as 'ne' for 'eine', etc. He got accustomed to different dialects of German by staying in different areas. He improved his German mostly by listening and did no analysis of the language: "I had to hear something, I would ask for it again and again, until I was sure of what I was hearing."

The third type of approach to language learning which Mr. J. experienced was field work in Mohawk. For the first time, there existed no references, no ready answers for his questions. There was no reliable research, so he had to analyze the language, phonology as well as morphology, himself. He was very motivated to learn Mohawk, because he discovered from his grandmother that he was part Mohawk: "That was a sufficient romantic attachment to make it /the study of Mohawk/ quite real." Mr. J. used native informants, but he did not like imposing upon their time too much. He indicated that by now he knew a large enough corpus to read Mohawk but not for using it.

One of the languages Mr. J. knew best was Icelandic. He learned Icelandic from his first wife, together with his baby daughter. He would listen to his wife, trying to pick up the sounds-- "Of course, you form an hypothesis and it's for practical purposes, you use the word and eventually it gets fixed." Unfortunately, his wife never corrected him. He indicated that he was still coming

across words he had learned incorrectly but "thoroughly".

Mr. J.'s progress was fairly slow at the beginning. Icelandic morphology and phonology did not come easily to him. He did not remember words very easily, although finding cognates helped to a certain extent. It was mainly through constant exposure to Icelandic in his home and, above all,during one summer in Iceland that he acquired the language. When visiting his in-laws in Iceland, it was his mother-in-law who provided the necessary constant correction, after she had found out that he wanted to be corrected: "She virtually corrected everything that I said wrong."

His problems in communicating were enormous, especially during the very first time he visited Iceland. ("It almost broke up my marriage five years earlier.") His wife ignored him and did not even relate the gist of the conversations to him. He was getting rather frustrated at not being able to understand anything. His wife's five-year-old sister finally began to teach him Icelandic. He was not aware at first that he was learning "Baby-Icelandic", which led to a few humourous and slightly embarrassing situations, for example, when he asked a policeman in Iceland, "Excuse me, Mr. Copper-wopper, where...". The policeman enjoyed the incident, and so did he.

Mr. J. emphasized the importance of overcoming one's shyness and attempting to talk. "You have to talk. If you sit around and are quiet, you don't learn as much." Since he did not push himself too much during this first visit, he did not improve his Icelandic too much. One other impeding factor was the complicatedness of the language,

which made it very hard just to pick up words, phrases, etc.

Mr. J.'s most recent language learning experience was Hungarian. He reported that he regularly talked to the Hungarian janitor of a particular university building, and was learning Hungarian "by osmosis".

Despite the multitude of languages Mr. J. has come into contact with, he indicated, when queried, that he would like to learn some Slavic languages other than Russian, because he had a liking for "underdog" languages.

When asked if he felt that he had a gift for languages, Mr. J. responded that he was highly motivated but did not think he was particularly gifted. He gradually developed a good ear for languages; he did not consider his memory to be extraordinary: however, he certainly enjoyed analyzing languages-- "That is my life now." Mr. J. indicated that he had not always liked languages. As a matter of fact, he detested English in high school. The change in attitude came through meeting people who spoke other languages. He realized "that learning a language is the key to other people's culture and their way of life".

In conclusion of his biography, Mr. J. was asked to name the main factors to which he would attribute his success in language learning. The first aspect he mentioned was motivation:

> Motivation means a lot, whether it is dedication to people you know, or to even an abstract idea-- like my Indian ancestors--or whether it is to a teacher you like.

The second factor named was "techniques". Mr. J. was convinced that linguistics had helped him with language learning and that language learning had helped him with linguistics. But linguistics gave him a "phonetic awareness", enabled him "to analyze what was being said and to arrive at rules". He further indicated that he had "an ability to segment forms and to try to form hypotheses".

Discussion of Case Study Nine

Since Mr. J. learned such a large number of languages, the different aspects of the model will not be discussed with reference to all languages learned. Instead, we will comment on the general characteristics of his language learning and give a few specific example.

Triggering factors. From early childhood on Mr. J. had displayed an interest in language, starting from his aroused curiosity in French, the "secret language" of his grandmother, to the obvious enjoyment of language learning in high school. It is therefore not surprising that the acquisition process of Mr. J.'s major languages, namely French, German, Rumanian, and Icelandic, was triggered very 'easily', so-to-speak. Learning German was a necessary, though secondary process in the study of Hittite, since the textbook was written in German. As to French, Mr. J. did not indicate why he enrolled in a French summer course, although his personal friendship with a French girl may not only have acted as concomitant but also as a triggering factor.

With respect to Rumanian, Mr. J.'s advisor at university is partly to 'blame', since he encouraged Mr. J. to focus on languages rather than on math and science; Rumanian happened to be one of the language courses Mr. J. could start in that particular semester. A triggering factor for his later change in approaching language learning was his stay in a Rumanian hospital. Learning Icelandic was triggered by his choosing an Icelandic wife.

Generally speaking, almost any circumstances, whether of accidental, personal or academic nature, became triggering factors for Mr. J.'s language learning.

Active task approach. Mr. J. responded extremely positively to almost all learning opportunities he encountered, whether they were formal or informal learning situations. Generally, when he felt that one setting did not provide sufficient opportunity for learning, he sought and found ways of supplementing it. Thus, in addition to the university course in Russian, he took extra conversation classes with a White Russian priest. After having learned some German via Hittite, he attended a German class outside the university. Some of the languages Mr. J. had begun in a formal learning context he later pursued and perfected in informal learning situations. In sum, Mr. J. controlled the conditions of his language learning so that he could profit 'linguistically'.

Other evidence for his active involvement in the learning task is, for example, his conscious effort to memorize. His language learning experience convinced him that memorizing is one of the

essential language learning activities. He also developed aids to memory, because he felt that he did not have such a good memory. One of these aids was taking notes of everything he encountered, such as new words, phrases, etc. He followed this technique as long as he considered it necessary.

Furthermore, Mr. J. diligently practised certain aspects of the languages which caused him difficulties, such as trilling the Russian 'r'. Although Mr. J. claimed that he did not do a lot of homework, his statements nevertheless evidence that he constantly occupied himself with the different languages he was learning, e.g., he read grammar books, or he talked to himself a great deal. When learning French, for example, he immediately checked with a dictionary whenever an unknown word came to his mind.

In sum, it appeared that Mr. J. left very little to chance, but constantly and consciously attempted to increase his knowledge. However, although this interpretative statement is true as a general characterization of his task approach, Mr. J. obviously selected a few languages (German, French, Rumanian, Icelandic) for special attention and continuous involvement. How far accidental circumstances, e.g., being married to an Icelandic woman or getting a job in the target country (Rumania), or conscious decisions played a role in the selection is not positively known.

Realization of language as a system. Mr. J.'s dealing with language as a system is a very prominent feature of his language learning. Grammar obviously appealed to Mr. J. As indicated previously, he enjoyed reading grammar books. When taking a Russian

course at university, Mr. J. regularly stayed after class to discuss certain aspects of Russian grammar or of the historical development of the Russian language.

Mr. J. strongly emphasized the importance of learning rules with understanding, either by inducing them from given texts or by being presented with them, in order to be able to analyze the language one is learning. Mr. J.'s linguistic training at university enabled him to take a very analytical approach to language learning, especially to those languages to which he did not have a great amount of exposure. Mr. J. reported that his first approach to learning a language was to analyze it in terms of its morphology, phonology and syntax. The analysis of sounds and word segmentation helped him to remember words (see p. 178).

Other reported incidents in which Mr. J. realized language as a system occurred when he was learning Rumanian and Icelandic. Mr. J. mentioned that he "made things up" in Rumanian, he tried to find cognates in Icelandic, formed hypotheses about the language and tried them out — an aspect of his language learning which will be discussed under 'monitoring'. The systematic use of his 'analytical tools' was essential when Mr. J. did field work in Mohawk. Since no reliable reference books existed, he had to analyze Mohawk phonology and morphology himself.

Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction. With the exception of those languages which he studied for purely academic reasons, e.g., Swahili, Hittite, Gaelic, Mr. J.'s case study provides plenty of evidence that language learning also

meant communicating in the target language. Communication was a salient feature in the acquisition of German, Rumanian and Icelandic, his major languages. It generally appeared to have provided a strong motivational stimulus for language learning.

Management of affective demands. Mr. J. described himself as a "naturally talkative person", a disposition which probably helped him to overcome any feelings of inhibition and embarrassment which he encountered during his language learning, for example, when learning Rumanian in hospital or Icelandic from his in-laws. Mr. J. emphasized that it is absolutely essential to overcome those feelings which prevent the learner from attempting to speak in the foreign language.

As in the previous case study, affective demands in a negative sense were almost non-existent; on the contrary, Mr. J. had generally displayed a positive, outgoing and adventurous attitude towards the language and its speakers.

Monitoring. Another key feature of Mr. J.'s approach to language learning in general was his constant attempt to monitor his performance. Several times during the interview he stressed how essential it is for the language learner to be corrected immediately, because learning mistakes is "fatal". Where native speakers were available, Mr. J. always asked for corrective feedback. His learning of Icelandic and Rumanian provide clear evidence for this strategy.

Being corrected was an essential follow-up process to

generating sentences, guessing, trying out hypotheses-- a strategy Mr. J. was actively engaged in. In addition to native speaker feedback or as a substitue thereof, Mr. J. also took recourse to grammar books or dictionaries.

Other comments. Mr. J.'s language learning experiences revealed three different ways of approaching the task at hand. The first one could be called the 'cognitive approach', in which the language is systematically analyzed in terms of its phonology, morphology and grammatical structures. The initial stages are oriented more towards the written norms of the language rather than towards the spoken language. Scientific material is consulted; it may even be the starting-point for learning the language and learning about the target language.

The second type of approach might be described as the 'immersion approach'. The language learner is surrounded by the language; he does not analyze the language consciously; his orientation is towards the acquisition of 'authentic' spoken language. Linguistic references may or may not be consulted.

The third approach is determined by its unusual conditions, namely the "field approach". Although 'cognitive' in nature, a slight difference to the first approach, mentioned above, exists. In general, textbooks and reference grammar books are not available: the language has largely not been researched and adequately described.

Although these three approaches can be separated theoretically, it is doubtful whether Mr. J. would have been as successful in his

immersion situation if he had not previously practised employing his 'analytical tools' systematically. Mr. J. himself indicated that knowing how to analyze a language is essential for language learning (see quote, p. 182).

Like Mr. H., another outstanding language learner, Mr. J. did not believe that he was particularly "gifted" for language learning. He also appeared to have learned how to learn languages. Although it may be difficult for an 'ordinary' language learner to duplicate some of the techniques which have evolved from a thorough linguistic training, there are nevertheless many adoptable techniques, such as talking aloud, asking for corrections, checking words in the dictionary, trying to make cross-lingual comparisons, and, generally speaking, using the language as much as possible. How the strategy of constant active involvement can be realized has clearly been demonstrated by Mr. J.

One final comment has to be made. The most important factor to which Mr. J. attributed his success in language learning was motivation. In many cases, personal attachment to speakers of the target language provided this constant motivation to persist in language learning, occasionally even to start learning a language. However, as Mr. J. pointed out, the experience of having an excellent teacher or of realizing "that learning a language is the key to other people's culture and their way of life" are just as motivating as personal friendships.

Case Study Ten

This case study of an interviewee who professed to be an unsuccessful language learner is presented here to provide a contrasting language learning experience.

NAME: Ms. K.

AGE GROUP: 26-35

OCCUPATION: Psychometrist

LANGUAGES LEARNED: French, German, Spanish, Hebrew

Ms. K. was born in Milton, Ontario, and spent her childhood in the same town. The language spoken at home and in the immediate neighbourhood was English. Ms. K. indicated that she may have heard some Italian, since there were Italian immigrants in Milton, but that she was generally not very aware of other languages being spoken.

As for most of the other interviewees, French was the first foreign language Ms. K. learned. She began studying French in Grade 9 and continued until Grade 13. She clearly remembered that she had a "terrible, terrible teacher" in Grade 9. "He used to come into class and act a fool." He taught French in English. The students had to memorize vocabulary and do grammatical exercises. Her Grade 10 and 11 teacher was an alcoholic -- "The alcohol would float over the room." He was a native speaker of French and spoke it in class, but all the students were physically terrified of him. "He would rant and rave, and he would pick up guys and throw them out of the room." The general attitude was "just to sit there, keeping your head down, hoping he wouldn't ask you a question." The Grade 12

teacher spoke a lot of French, but Ms. K. was no longer interested in learning French. "By that time I was really turned off French. So I did really poorly."

After Grade 12, Ms. K. moved to a different town. When she entered Grade 13 French, she realized that she was "way behind" the other students. She barely "scraped through".

Ms. K. was asked to point out the most difficult aspects of classroom language learning. She answered that she had difficulty distinguishing the sounds of words. "I would hear a word and it sounded just like another word... It was like a big jumbled mess." In addition, "pronunciation was just horrible" for her. One task she particularly disliked was having to get up and read aloud: "My reading was just a joke." The Grade 13 teacher made her repeat the sentences and words over and over again until she got them right. Ms. K. indicated that she was one of the three worst students of the class, but she was not really distressed about her poor performance: "It was a big laugh... It wasn't as if I was snubbed in the halls because I was poor in French."

During the first year of university, Ms. K. enrolled in a compulsory French course. When asked whether she would have taken French if it had not been obligatory, Ms. K. at first indicated that she would probably have felt obliged to enroll in the course, since Canada is a bilingual country; however, she then changed her mind, and expressed some doubt: "I guess I wouldn't have. I don't think I would have consciously started learning French, I probably would have tried to avoid it." The university course was mostly held in

English. The focus was on literature. Although students were supposed to read the books in their original language, Ms. K. usually read their English translations.

After university, Ms. K. travelled through France, Spain, Switzerland, Austria and Germany with a friend. Since they were hitch-hiking, they had to make themselves understood. People had difficulty understanding Ms. K., and they alwayz started laughing, which, however, did not bother her. In France, she discovered that she remembered enough vocabulary to exchange a few pleasantries and to express necessities: "It was funny how words sort of came back that I didn't think I'd remember." She indicated that she managed to keep up a conversation in a car for about two hours. Usually, however, her girl-friend, who knew more French than she did, did most of the talking.

In Germany, she found that most people spoke at least some English. Before she went on her trip, she had studied German on her own for a while, with the occasional help of a friend. She had learned some grammar rules and vocabulary and was able to read German signs and say a few simple sentences.

In Spain, Ms. K. used a phrase book and learned a few words and expressions. She made cross-lingual comparisons between Spanish and French to increase her comprehension.

Ms. K. reported that she always travelled with someone who spoke English. She indicated that she was not very independent. She also doubted if she would have learned more of the languages if she

had been on her own, due to other "psychological factors": "I don't think I would have learned another language very well... I think you have to be really alert to pick up words, etc."

The only other language learning experience was with Hebrew. A year before the interview took place, Ms. K. attended a Jewish Information Course and learned how to read Hebrew, without paying attention to the meaning of what she was reading. She felt that her pronunciation was not fantastic but no one ever commented on it. She had difficulty with the 'ch' sound. Though the course was rather repetitive and involved a lot of rote learning, she enjoyed it.

When asked if she would like to learn more of the languages she had been exposed to, Ms. K. answered positively: "I'd like to learn more. I think the only way I'd ever learn more would be if I was in a situation where it was essential for me to communicate." She felt that if she lived in the L_2 environment she would be motivated to learn the language. "If I couldn't talk, it would kill me. I don't think I'd be like the little Italian ladies who come to Toronto and never learn English."

When asked if she believed that some people had a gift for language and others did not, she replied in the affirmative and explained why she considered herself to be weak in languages: "I just don't have an ear for languages... It's hard work when I learn a language. I am just not a good auditory person." She mentioned that she was very selective about what she would listen to and that she

could tune out certain things. She further indicated that she needed visual aids and had to take notes when having to listen for a long time. Otherwise she would find it very hard to concentrate.

In response to the questions on other aspects of aptitude, Ms. K. stated that she had a good memory, but that she did not like analyzing languages: "I think my attitude was that rules were there to hinder me."

Ms. K. concluded her language learning history by summing up some of the influential factors which she felt impeded her achievement. She mentioned the teachers and their way of teaching, and the lack of exposure to the target language in the environment. In addition, she indicated that she thought she lacked in aptitude. Ms. K. modified this statement with an interesting comment: "Maybe I don't have aptitude because I talked myself into it."

Discussion of Case Study Ten

In the following discussion of the applicability of the proposed language learning model to this particular case study, the various aspects of the model will serve as a basis for the analysis of what Ms. K. failed to do.

Triggering factors. As in the case of many other interviewees, Mr. K.'s first language learning experience (French) was triggered by official curriculum policies, namely that French had to be studied by every student for a certain number of years.

As regards German, Ms. K. started to learn this language because she had planned to hitch-hike through several European

countries, including Germany. As to Spanish, it probably was the pressure of having to express some necessities which made her learn a little Spanish.

Ms. K.'s reason for enrolling in a Hebrew course is not positively known, but can be conjectured; Ms. K. probably felt that -- being of Jewish faith -- she should know some Hebrew.

Active task approach. It is in this respect that Ms. K. lacked most: she failed to involve herself in the language learning task; she did not utilize the learning opportunity offered in high school. Although it could be argued that important extenuating circumstances were present -- Ms. K. was exposed to several apparently extremely bad teachers -- it is evident that Ms. K. did nothing to change or ameliorate the situation, for example, by seeking other learning opportunities outside the classroom.

A slightly more active approach was taken in learning German. Ms. K. studied German on her own for a whole year before travelling to Europe. There is, however, no indication that she attempted to exploit the informal learning situation when she actually was in the L2 environment.

With respect to Hebrew, Ms. K.'s most recent language learning attempt, she seemed to have applied some effort to learning how to pronounce and read Hebrew. Ms. K. reported that she enjoyed the course very much, although it involved a lot of rote learning.

Realization of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction. The interview with Ms. K. yielded very little information on these aspects of the model. Ms. K.

reported that she learned grammar rules for French and German and that she made cross-lingual comparisons between Spanish and French.

While travelling through Europe, Ms. K. did attempt to communicate in the respective languages, especially in French. Generally speaking, communication appears to be the most important aspect in learning a language for Ms. K., at least with respect to future language learning. Ms. K. indicated that the only situation which would motivate her to learn a language would be one in which she would have to communicate. However, again it has to be pointed out that Ms. K. so far had made no attempts to consciously seek such a learning opportunity.

Management of affective demands. Ms. K.'s description of her language learning experiences gave the impression that she lacked self-confidence and was not willing to take any 'linguistic' risks. She reported that she was "not very independent" and, for example, always travelled with someone who spoke English. It appears that she did not attempt to overcome this disadvantageous disposition.

Other comments. The question of why Ms. K. was so unsuccessful in learning languages, especially French, remains difficult to answer. That is to say, it is difficult to state clear and unambigious reasons for her lack of achievement. Probably, a combination of factors was operating. Apart from the aspects mentioned by Ms. K. herself (teacher, teaching, environment, lack of aptitude) a lack of self-confidence, persistence, achievement orientation and of motivation are likely to have been of influence as well.

Ms. K.'s comment on her difficulty in sound/word distinction raises an interesting question: Could this deficiency have been overcome by appropriate training in the early stages of her language learning? Unfortunately, we will never know. Perhaps Politzer and Weiss' unsuccessful experiment (1969), in which they attempted to increase learners' aptitude by exposing them to a training program in different characteristics of aptitude, should be repeated with subjects who have had an unsuccessful language learning experience and who believe that lack of aptitude, e.g., lack of auditory discrimination, is their major 'handicap'.

Summary Comments and Critical Evaluation of the Tentative Model of the Second Language Learning Process

The selected case studies, presented in the preceding section, and the discussions of the applicability of the tentative language learning model (see p. 69) have generally confirmed the model, but have also shown certain shortcomings. It is considered to be appropriate at this point briefly to comment on the various aspects of the model.

The nine case studies of successful language learners illustrate the individuality of the different language learning careers and also reveal some common characteristics. All aspects of the model apply to all case studies; however, there frequently is variation in the way the different aspects were realized.

It is of interest, for example, to compare what kind of stimuli initially triggered language learning in these selected interviewees. In many cases, the learning of the first foreign language

took place because of official curriculum requirements (e.g., case studies one, five, seven, or eight). This can be explained by the fact that the first language learning experiences usually began at the school levels.

As reported by the interviewees, a variety of other agents operated as 'triggering factors' for initial and/or later language learning; such as parental pressure (e.g., case study two with respect to Hebrew); academic orientation (e.g., case study five regarding German and Latin); the opportunity of combining a formal with a functional approach in the case of Mr. B. (with respect to his second exposure to Hebrew) and Ms. E. (re Italian); a professional opportunity in the case of Mr. F. (re Spanish); sudden infatuation with the sound of a language and with one of its speakers in the case of Mr. H.'s first encounter with Russian; advice and encouragement by a teacher triggered Mr. J.'s learning of Rumanian. These are just some of the influencing factors mentioned by the interviewees.

Furthermore, it became apparent that different 'triggering factors' accounted for the learning of the different languages. In the case of Mr. D., for example, language learning in high school was caused either by official requirements or by parental pressure. Learning German at university was the result of accidental circumstances -- German happened to be a prerequisite for studying mathematics. Mr. D.'s experience with learning German in itself became a 'triggering factor' for his anew interest in the language which he had studied in high school, at that time without any enthusiasm.

It is important to note that all these 'triggering factors' so-to-speak 'fall on fertile soil' in the good language learner; in other words, they interact with inherent learner characteristics which make the learner willing to accept the challenge of the new language learning task and positively affect the language learning process. It is in this respect that the language learning model is deficient. Some of these learner characteristics may be intelligence, language learning aptitude, or academic orientation and achievement orientation, as in the case of Ms. A., for example, who reported that from early childhood on her parents had stressed the importance of an academic education and of trying as hard as possible to do well in school.

Personality aspects, such as extroversion, persistence, diligence, are other learner characteristics which will facilitate language learning in general or the acquisition of certain aspects of language.

The ways in which the nine successful language learners tackled the language learning task again demonstrate individuality as well as commonality. The broader context and the individual circumstances are unique; however, the learners' involvement and their active approach to the learning task at hand are similar. The experiences reported by these interviewees give validity to the different strategies presented earlier (see p. 51). For example, Ms. A. added related language learning activities to the regular language program she attended (Strategy 1b); Ms. C. and Ms. E. practised pronunciation as well as different structures by using native speakers as linguistic

models (Strategy 1c); Mr. J. identified a particular problem in pronunciation and tackled it by practising aloud (Strategy 1c/d); Ms. C. and Mr. D. 're-functioned' activities (Strategy 1e), Ms. C. by going to movies she had already seen because they were dubbed into the foreign language she was learning, and Mr. D. by playing 'Jack-of-all-trades' for a German company.

In addition, all of the nine successful language learners developed an awareness of language as a system (Strategy 2) and as a means of communication and interaction (Strategy 3). Again, individual differences, for example, in cognitive style, will have affected the way in which these aspects were realized. However, our information is restricted to the interviewees' reports and is, therefore, limited. We know, for example, that Ms. C. used the technique of making cross-lingual comparisons, finding cognates. Mr. H. and Mr. J. perfected this technique and extended it to phonology and morphology. All of the interviewees, perhaps with the exception of Ms. A., deliberately sought out communicative situations for the purpose of interacting with members of the target language and/or in order to increase their oral skills (Strategy 3b).

Affective demands were especially reported by Mr. B., Mr. D., Ms. E., Mr. F., and Mr. J.. For example, Mr. B. reported that, in order to cope with the problem of learning how to speak Hebrew, he made contact with children, because he felt less embarrassed to talk to them. Ms. E. recalled how she was forced to overcome her inhibition to speak the foreign language by having to act as an interpreter between an Italian and an American friend. Mr. F. emphasized

the importance of humour, of being able to laugh at one's mistakes. Similarly, Mr. J.'s initial experience in Iceland confirmed him in his conviction that one had to overcome one's shyness and use the language as much as possible: "If you sit around and are quiet, you don't learn as much."

As previously indicated, affective demands were less prominent or almost non-existent in some cases due to certain personality characteristics (see, for example, case study eight). Therefore, it may sometimes be inappropriate to talk about affective 'demands'. Nevertheless, in the case of the selected interviewees, this aspect of the model proved to be valid since all subjects had experienced some affective demands which the language learning task imposed upon them, such as feelings of inhibition, embarrassment or frustration and impatience.

The last aspect of the language learning model, 'monitoring', has found evidence in most case studies. For example, Ms. E., Mr. F., and Mr. J. give clear evidence for this strategy. Ms. E. constantly monitored the language she was producing, being "on the look-out for clues"; Mr. F., Mr. H., and Mr. J. constantly elicited corrections from native speakers for newly generated (hypothesized) constructions.

With respect to the unsuccessful language learner (case study ten), the various aspects of the model served as analytical tools to indicate the areas which Ms. K. failed to realize. In Ms. K.'s case, however, it is impossible to determine whether certain learner characteristics, such as lack of aptitude, were the crucial factors for her failure in language learning.

As stated at the beginning of this section, the case studies demonstrated individual as well as common characteristics of language learning. One of the most striking common features becomes apparent when one considers the outcome of all these different language learning efforts. All interviewees, including the other subjects of the sample, did not achieve or attempt to reach the same levels of proficiency in all the languages they had begun to learn. A variety of reasons may account for this phenomenon: (1) too brief an exposure to the language(s); (2) unfavourable learning environments; (3) lack of interest and motivation to pursue a particular language further; (4) circumstantial factors, which determine one's personal selection of a certain language.

Since the interviewees had not explicitly been asked to explain why they had selected a particular language for their sustained concentrated efforts, the above-mentioned reasons should be regarded as explanations on the part of the interviewer. However, these interpretative remarks can indirectly be supported by some of the statements made in the interviews. For example, Mr. B. indicated that one of the reasons for his failure in learning French was the lack of a social context. Similarly, Ms. E. remarked that she was only interested in reviving her French and in learning a new language if the opportunity existed of immediately applying her knowledge in concrete situations.

Ms. G. indicated that only the necessity of the situation or the desire to communicate would motivate her to learn another language or to increase her competence in a language she has already

partially acquired. In addition, Ms. G. mentioned 'social appropriateness' as a factor influencing the degree of her involvement in a certain language.

In the case of Mr. H., who, as one might say, made language learning into a life-long hobby, accidental circumstances and professional opportunities acted as selective determinants; for example, he "stumbled" into the Spanish-speaking community on the Philippines; and he was sent to Japan by the State Department to run their language programs for diplomats.

It might be impossible for the interviewees themselves clearly to explain why they focused their prolonged attention on one language in preference to another, perhaps with the exception of those situations in which a professional activity was involved, as in the case of Ms. E. and Mr. F..

Whatever the initial selective determinants may have been, it appears that one of the major factors which made the learners persist in language learning was the gradual establishment of an 'emotional bond' to the language. The development of this bond was frequently stimulated by experiences external to the actual language learning process. We have suggested to call these influencing factors 'concomitant factors'. Like the inherent learner characteristics, 'concomitant factors' were not included in the original presentation of the language learning model, but form a very important dimension of the total language learning experience.

For example, Ms. A. reported that her teacher's enthusiasm for French was 'contagious'; Mr. B. succeeded in learning Hebrew

when he experienced a good teacher as well as good contacts with native speakers of that language. Mr. F. had mentioned that travelling through Europe had awakened the desire in him to be able to communicate with members of other languages and cultures. The basis for the 'emotional bond' had thus been laid and he built upon it when he lived among Costa Ricans. Mr. H.'s and Mr. J.'s case studies provide plenty of evidence for the importance of the 'emotional bond' to the languages learned. They further illustrate that this bond can also be developed through experience with the language itself; the language so-to-speak begins to 'intrigue' the learner.

Generally speaking, the 'emotional bond' is similar to Gardner and Lambert's "integrative orientation" (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:14). The difference, however, is that Gardner and Lambert treat this concept more as a 'triggering factor', which precedes language learning, whereas in the case of these interviewees, it generally appears to have developed as a result of their total language learning experience. However, once an integrative orientation has been developed, it could also act as a 'triggering factor' for subsequent language learning (see, for example, case study eight).

To conclude the present discussion, the selected detailed case studies have confirmed the various aspects of the tentative language learning model; however, they have also demonstrated that the model is not exhaustive. Inherent learner characteristics and concomitant factors, both of which influence the language learning process, have been identified as important items in the total picture of the language learner. Each language learner will probably

have a different combination of inherent characteristics and be exposed to different concomitant factors. To allow at least for the graphic presentation of these two dimensions, a slight modification of the language learning model, which does not reduce it original clarity, is suggested (see Figure 2).

The language learning model is still regarded as tentative. It is hoped that future research will develop a comprehensive model of the language learning process, which incorporates all variables. The value of the present model lies in the fact that it resulted from the self-reports of successful language learners, that it describes essential aspects of the language learning process as viewed by the learners, and that it is both analytical and dynamic. It is hoped that it will facilitate the formulation of more specific questions to be asked of good as well as poor learners, if another investigation similar to the present one were conducted again.

A TENTATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING MODEL (slightly modified)

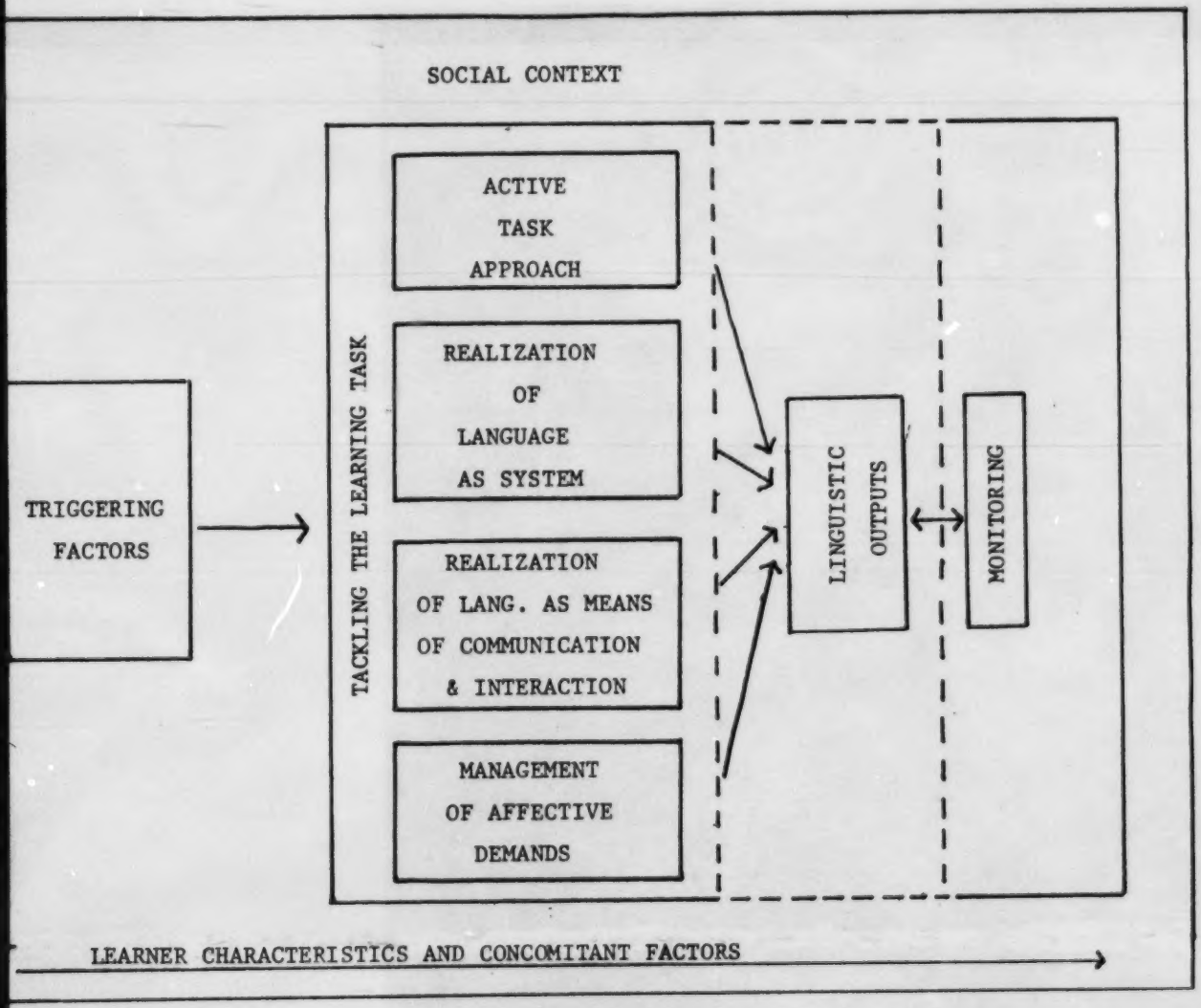

Figure 2.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The final chapter will summarize the major findings of the study, indicate several practical implications and make a few suggestions for further research.

Major Findings

The interview study generally confirmed the kinds of strategies suggested by Rubin's and Stern's inventories. Although Stern's list had been used as a framework for the formulation of the strategies, the present list of strategies, developed in this study, is largely based upon actual statements made by the interviewees. The attempt was made to avoid overlaps. The super-ordinate strategies, which could also be called general language learning descriptors, focus on one specific aspect of the language learning process, namely on the learner's active approach to the language learning task, his realization of language as a system and as a means of communication and interaction, his management of the affective demands, and on the way he

monitors his language learning (see p. 51f.). The language learning strategies are per definitionem more general. Therefore, a list of concrete techniques, as reported by the interviewees, was tabulated (see p. 57f.).

The super-ordinate strategies or learning descriptors lent themselves to the development of a tentative language learning model, describing the language learning process from the learner's point of view (see p. 69). The discussions of the applicability of the model to the ten detailed case studies basically confirmed the model; however, they also revealed its limitations in that it did not include characteristics which are inherent in the learner, such as aptitude, intelligence or personality characteristics; nor did it integrate so-called 'concomitant factors' which influence the language learning process, or are a result of it. Each language learner will have a different combination of inherent characteristics, the relative significance of which future research will have to determine. The language learning process of each individual will also reveal a large variety of concomitant factors.

To allow at least for the graphic presentation of these learner characteristics and concomitant factors, the model was slightly modified (see p. 210). The model still has to be regarded as tentative; but it is hoped that it will stimulate further discussion and research so that a comprehensive model can be developed.

While this study indicated certain commonalities among the good language learners, especially with regard to strategies and

techniques they had employed or would employ, it also illustrates the complexity of each individual learning situation and career. It is interesting to note that many interviewees were not immediately successful when confronted with the language learning task. As a matter of fact, some interviewees discovered and developed their language learning potential accidentally in the later stages of their lives. Since so many subjects successfully acquired a foreign language after they had left the formal learning setting of high school, one is left wondering if a greater maturity level is not, after all, a very important factor facilitating language learning (see Burstall et al., 1974).

Looking at the different case studies suggests that perceived, though not measured, aptitude might be less of a crucial factor than attitude to language learning, motivation, persistence, and development of learning techniques suitable to the learner's personal needs.

From the point of view of research methodology, reporting in retrospect combined with prediction on the basis of a hypothetical language learning situation, such as was demanded by the interview procedure, was productive. However, the suspicion remains that, due to the time lapse between actual language learning experience and the interview, and because of the global view, prompted by the interview questions, many aspects and details of the language learning process may have been missed. Having attempted to uncover aspects of this process via an approach which demands a great deal of introspection, we are very much aware of the fact that the language learning process has many elements of which the learner is unconscious

and which, therefore, cannot be revealed by this research instrument.

Practical Implications

One of the most positive general aspects of the present research study, especially with respect to the individual case studies, is that the different language learning experiences, as reported by the interviewees, are very realistic and authentic. Any language learner who is presently involved in acquiring another language may gain insights from the concrete accounts of difficulties encountered, how they were overcome, what kind of techniques were developed, etc. It appears to be of particular importance for language learners to have realistic expectations of the task at hand, of the time involved and the energy demanded. However, it appears that they can also be assured that they will eventually succeed.

If one considers the large variety of techniques, it is worthwhile noting that many of these techniques are by no means extraordinary. This may be a consoling factor to teachers who frequently yearn for the panacea in language teaching. The different strategies and techniques may also encourage learners as well as teachers to reflect upon their own approach to learning and teaching; language learners may adopt some of the techniques which suit their individual needs or feel stimulated to develop their own techniques.

Suggestions for Future Research

Since the number of interviewees was relatively small and the spectrum of the subjects' present professional activities and educational backgrounds fairly narrow, it might be useful to conduct

a similar study with members of more distinct groups, such as language teachers, businessmen, interpreters and translators. It is hypothesized that a larger variety of strategies and techniques could be elicited, probably focusing on different language skills.

It is further suggested that the different inventories of language learning strategies and techniques be studied critically and a carefully designed new list, which is clearly related to (or results in) a comprehensive language learning model, be developed.

Another interesting and valuable study would be to devise an experimental program to test the teachability and effectiveness of the identified techniques.

In order to overcome the problem of reporting 'in retrospect', it is suggested to observe, interview and test good and poor language learners who are presently involved in acquiring a second language in a variety of learning settings.

Two other interesting research questions have been raised through this investigation: (1) Are the characteristics of aptitude as identified by Carroll and Sapon (1959) and Pimsleur (1966) subject to change through specific training programs or do they change through learning a language? (see Politzer and Weiss, 1969); (2) How many major stages in language learning exist, how can they be defined, and how can problems related to the different stages be overcome?

It is hoped that future investigations into the language learning process will result in making language learning a more accessible and enjoyable task for a larger number of people than is presently the case.

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Appendix One

Interview Questionnaire

THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
252 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA M5S 1V6 TELEPHONE 923-6641

THE LANGUAGE LEARNING PROJECT

Interviewer: Interview No:

Date: Name of Respondent:

Place:

INTERVIEW Part I

I would like to talk to you about your own personal language learning experience, when and how you learned a second (or third) language, in what sequence, etc.

Your name will be kept confidential, and there is no testing involved.

If you don't mind, however, I'd like to tape our conversation as an aid to memory for myself.

May I now ask you a few general questions for our research records?

Respondent:

NAME: AGE GROUP:

ADDRESS: 18 and under:
19 - 25 :
26 - 35 :
36 - 50 :
PHONE: 51 - 65 :
over 65 :

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

High School (or equivalent):

Beyond High School:

Highest Qualification:

Present or previous OCCUPATION:

Present:

Previous:

I'd now like to ask you some facts about yourself and your language learning experience from your childhood to the present time.

1. Where were you born?

2. Where did you spend your childhood?

3. What languages were spoken in your home?

3.1. What do you regard as your native language?

4. What languages were spoken in your neighbourhood?

5. Which was the first foreign language you learned?

6. When did you start and how long did you learn...?

7. Where and under what circumstances did you learn...?

Possible sub-questions

a) When you learned... (at school/at home, etc.), what did you study, mainly grammar, for example?

b) What kind of text-books did you use?

c) Did the teacher speak in the foreign language most of the time?

d) Did you have to speak a lot yourself or did you mainly read and/or translate?

e) Do you remember what kind of homework you had to do?

f) Do you remember what you had to practise, what was really difficult for you?

g) Did you have any contact outside the classroom/your home with speakers of that language?

h) Did you have the chance to listen to the radio or see films in the foreign language/ in class or outside?

8. Which other languages have you studied or tried to study?

9. Which of these languages have you maintained to the present?

10. Could you now tell me how well you know these languages now or when you were at your best?

Would you look at this card, please.

If you had to describe your knowledge of ... , which of these statements would be most appropriate?

Interviewer: Ask about the different stages of language learning: elementary
intermediate
advanced

You can indicate, if your knowledge is slightly above or below these levels.

(for interviewer: circle language, if reference to past knowledge is made)

	Below Element.	Element. Proficiency	Working Knowledge	Advanced
Understanding				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

Sequence (start with best language)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Overall proficiency in ...

11. Are you satisfied with your achievement in .... (the different languages) or would you like to know more?

Satisfied: More: Other:

Language: Language:

12. Some people say they have a gift for languages, others say they haven't. Would you regard yourself as strong or weak in languages?

Strong: Weak: Medium:

1) Do you think that you have a good ear for languages? Yes No Other:

2) Do you have a good memory? Yes No Other:

(For what?)

3) Do you like to take the language apart and analyze it? Yes No

(Do you like to figure out the language on your own or would you rather have the teacher tell you rules, etc.)

13. If applicable:
Considering your level in (your success/failure in learning....), would you say this was due to the teacher/s (thanks to the .../ the teacher's fault.
the teaching

or did it have something to do with the school or the environment

or would you say that you developed some special study habits

or that you may have some particular personal characteristics that helped/ hindered you in learning ...

Part II

I would now like to ask you a few more specific questions concerning language learning. Some of the questions may not apply to you. Don't feel obliged to answer.

I. Imagine that you had the opportunity and time to learn another language now. What would you be inclined to say at the thought of learning a new language?

1. I hate the thought of it 1.
2. It scares me. 2.
3. I don't mind doing it 3.
4. I would look forward to doing it 4.
5. I am very excited at the idea of it 5.

If answer 1): If you had to do it nevertheless, which language would you choose?

For what reasons would you choose ...?

What would you expect to get out of it in the long run?

Subquestions: Would your final goal be to ...

Speak and understand the spoken language?
Read and write the language?
Speak, understand and read?
Speak, understand. read and write?

Other:

II. Let's now consider how you would actually go about learning ...

What would you like to do first of all?

1) Travel to the country and simply immerse yourself in the language? 1 ☐
2) Travel to the country and take a language course there? 2 ☐
3) Buy a course and study by yourself? What kind of course? 3 ☐
4) Go to a teacher or a language school for private lessons? 4 ☐
5) Join a language class? 5 ☐
6) A combination of these? Specify: 6 ☐
7) Other: 7 ☐

Can you suggest a reason for your choice?

II.i. If time were no consideration, would you prefer to learn the language in a concentrated effort (e.g. an intensive course for 4 weeks)?

or gradually, (e.g. 2 hours a week + homework) over a longer period of time?

Intensive:

Gradually:

Combination:

III. Some people think that learning a language is different at the elementary, intermediate and advanced stages.

Would you agree or disagree with this? And could you tell me why?

III.1. Beginning now with the early stages of language learning, what would you mainly like to do at that level?

I'll give you some examples. Please tell me which of these you regard as most important. But feel free to disregard them or add your own ideas.

1) I'd mainly like to learn to understand the spoken language.	1 ☐
2) I'd mainly like to learn to read.	2 ☐
3) I'd mainly like to learn the pronunciation.	3 ☐
4) I'd mainly like to learn simple conversational phrases.	4 ☐
5) I'd mainly like to learn how to write the language.	5 ☐
6) I'd mainly like to get an overview of the grammar.	6 ☐
7) I'd mainly like to learn about the cultural background.	7 ☐
8) I would like a combination of these. Could you please specify?	8 ☐
9) Other:	9 ☐

III.2 At the elementary stages would you prefer to be firmly guided by a teacher or a course,

or would you rather be left to your own devices and learn the language in your own way?

(By 'firm guidance' I mean, for example, doing language drills with the teacher or following a text-book and doing prescribed grammar exercises regularly.

In contrast to that you might prefer to work mainly on your own, at your own speed, selecting your own learning material, etc.)

Guided **Own Devices** **Combination:**

IV. Some of the ways of learning a language seem to involve you as a learner more actively (for example, in some cases you are made to speak right from the start),
others allow you to be more passive (for example, you just listen to the teacher or you read widely).
Generally speaking, would you prefer to be relatively passive or rather active in the early stages of language learning?

Active: Passive:

V. You have mentioned what you would like to learn at the early stages of language learning. Can you think of anything you would particularly like to learn or emphasize at an intermediate or advanced level?

Intermediate: Advanced:

VI. Some people say that you cannot make a conscious effort in learning a foreign language. They hate to study grammar; they say you must simply allow the language to sink in gradually.
Others argue that language learning is a conscious and systematic process. You set about it by studying, practising, by constantly asking for explanations and rules. In short, by actively thinking about it.

Which of these ideas would more represent your point of view?

Unconscious: Conscious:

VII. Some people find that in learning a new language you must completely forget your native language. Others say you cannot and should not.
To what extent do you find that comparing your native language with the foreign language helps you in learning a new language?

1. To what extent do you find translations useful?

2. Would you prefer to use a bilingual dictionary or rather a dictionary that offers explanations in the foreign language?

VIII. Do you feel that one can actually learn to think in a foreign language?

Yes: No:

1. If yes: How do you think one might achieve that?

2. How important do you think it is?

Very: Not so much:

IX. If you have learned a third or fourth language, to what extent did you find that your learning was influenced by your previous language learning experience?

(Interviewer: Wait for reaction and then summarize)

In general, would you say that knowing another foreign language helped you or hindered you in learning a new language?

Helped: Hindered:

X. So far, we have talked about what you'd like to learn, how you would go about doing it and how your native language might influence your learning other languages.
Considering all this, would you say that you have developed any language study habits (gimmicks, tricks, ways, techniques) that you would find useful in learning the new language?

1) in learning the sound system
e.g reading aloud to yourself (in front of a mirror), repeating words silently to yourself after the teacher, etc.

2) in learning the grammar
e.g. memorizing rules through humorous rhymes, etc., forming hunches about regularities and rules and then applying them, etc.

3) in learning vocabulary/words
e.g. by constant repetition, by finding relations between words, writing down words, etc.

4) in developing listening comprehension
e.g. by listening to records, to the radio, etc.

5) in learning to talk
e.g. through contact with native speakers, by insisting on constant correction or by imagining dialogues in your mind or by talking to yourself, etc.

6) in learning to read
e.g. by reading popular magazines or books on your own

7) in learning how to express yourself in written form
e.g. by writing to pen-pals

XI. My final question now concerns your feelings about your language learning experience.

Many language learners feel very negative about their learning experiences.

1. They say they feel a) discouraged
b) frustrated
c) impatient
or d) confused by the difficulties of the language learning task.

Have you experienced any of these feelings?

Could you tell me more about your feeling of ...?

2. Other language learners say that the new language feels e) absurd to them, and that they feel f) ridiculous expressing themselves in the foreign language.

   Did you ever feel that way?

3. Some people feel very g)inhibited and h) helpless when they actually use the language.

   Is this experience familiar to you? Could you elaborate?

   In general, as (if) you shared (some of) these feelings, what did you do to overcome them?

   (Interviewer: This question could be asked after each particular experience, if appropriate.)

Appendix Two

Introductory Letter

THE ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
252 BLOOR STREET WEST, TORONTO 5, ONTARIO, CANADA TELEPHONE 923-6641

January 20, 1974

Dear

In the course of a research project on language learning, carried out by the Modern Language Center of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, we would like to talk to you about your own personal language learning experience. For example, we would like to discuss with you when, how, and under what circumstances you learned a second (or third) language, and, if you encountered any difficulties, how you overcame them, etc.

This conversation will be on a completely informal basis; it will not involve any testing. Moreover, the names of the participants will not be disclosed in the study. Our purpose is to gather as much information as possible from different people. Your views and experiences will help us in a study of an area where many questions remain unanswered.

The conversation with one of our interviewers, Angie Todesco or Maria Fröhlich, would last approximately 30 - 45 minutes and could be arranged at your convenience. Please let me know, if you are willing to help. Hopefully, the conversation will prove to be equally valuable and interesting for you as it will be for us.

In reply, please write to me or phone 923-6641, ext. 338 and ask for Maria Fröhlich.

With many thanks in advance for giving us your time.

Yours sincerely,

H. H. Stern

HHS/jo

H.H. Stern
Director of the
Modern Language Center